

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SPARED!

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 30TH, 1902,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,

On a Lord's-day Evening, during the winter of 1860—1.

“I was left.”—Ezekiel ix. 8.

THE vision of Ezekiel which is recorded in the previous chapter, brought to light the abominations of the house of Judah. The vision which follows in this chapter shows the terrible retribution that the Lord God brought upon the guilty nation, beginning at Jerusalem.

He beheld the slaughtermen come forth with their weapons, he marked them begin the destroying work at the gate of the temple, he saw them proceed through the main streets, and not omit a single lane; they slew utterly all those who were not marked with the mark of the writer's inkhorn on their brow. He stood alone,—that prophet of the Lord,—himself spared in the midst of universal carnage; and as the carcasses fell at his feet, and the bodies stained with gore lay all around him, he said, “I was left.” He stood alive amongst the dead, because he was found faithful among the faithless; he survived in the midst of universal destruction, because he had served his God in the midst of universal depravity.

We shall now take the sentence apart altogether from Ezekiel's vision, and appropriate it to ourselves; and I think, when we read it over, and repeat it, “I was left,” it very naturally invites us to take a *retrospect of the past*, very readily also it suggests a *prospect of the future*, and, I think, it permits also a *terrible contrast* in reserve for the impenitent.

I. First of all, then, my brethren, we have here a pathetic reflection, which seems to invite us to take A SOLEMN RETROSPECT: “I was left.”

You remember, many of you, times of sickness, when cholera was in your streets. You may forget that season of pestilence, but I never can; when the duties of my pastorate called me continually to walk among your terror-stricken households, and to see the dying and the dead. Impressed upon my young heart must ever remain some of those sad scenes I witnessed when I first came to this metropolis, and was rather employed at that time to bury the dead than

to bless the living. Some of you have passed through not only one season of cholera, but many, and you have been present, too, perhaps, in climates where fever has prostrated its hundreds, and where the plague and other dire diseases have emptied out their quivers, and every arrow has found its mark in the heart of some one of your companions. Yet you have been left. You walked among the graves, but you did not stumble into them. Fierce and fatal maladies lurked in your path, but they were not allowed to devour you. The bullets of death whistled by your ears, and yet you stood alive, for his bullet had no billet for your heart. You can look back, some of you, through fifty, sixty, seventy years. Your bald and grey heads tell the story that you are no more raw recruits in the warfare of life. You have become veterans, if not invalids, in the army. You are ready to retire, to put off your armour, and give place to others. Look back, brethren, I say, you who have come into the sere and yellow leaf; remember the many seasons in which you have seen death hailing multitudes about you; and think, "I was left." And we, too, who are younger, in whose veins our blood still leaps in vigour, can remember times of peril, when thousands fell about us, yet we can say, in God's house, with great emphasis, "I was left,"—preserved, great God, when many others perished; sustained, standing on the rock of life when the waves of death dashed about me, the spray fell heavily upon me, and my body was saturated with disease and pain, yet am I still alive,—permitted still to mingle with the busy tribes of men.

Now, then, what does such a retrospect as this suggest? Ought we not each one of us to ask the question, What was I spared for? Why was I left? Many of you were, at that time, and some of you even now are, dead in trespasses and sins! You were not spared because of your fruitfulness, for you brought forth nothing but the grapes of Gomorrah. Certainly God did not stay his sword because of anything good in you. A multitude of clamorous evils in your disposition, if not in your conduct, might well have demanded your summary execution. You were spared. Let me ask you why? Was it that mercy might yet visit you,—that grace might yet renew your soul? Have you found it so? Has sovereign grace overcome you, beaten down your prejudices, thawed your icy heart, broken your stony will in pieces? Say, sinner, in looking back upon the times when you have been left, were you spared in order that you might be saved with a great salvation?

And if you cannot say, "Yes," to that question, let me ask you whether it may not be so yet? Soul, why has God spared you so long, while you are yet his enemy, a stranger to him, and far off from him by wicked works? Or, on the contrary, has he spared you—I tremble at the bare mention of the possibility,—has he prolonged your days to develop your propensities, that you may grow riper for damnation,—that you may fill up your measure of crying iniquity, and then go down to the pit a sinner seared and dry, like wood that is ready for the fire? Can it be so? Shall these spared moments be spoiled by more misdemeanours, or shall they be given up to repentance and to prayer? Will you now, ere the last of your

sins shall set in everlasting darkness, will you now look unto him? If so, you will have reason to bless God, through all eternity, that you were left, because you were left that you might yet seek and might yet find him who is the Saviour of sinners.

Do I speak to many of you who are Christians, who, too, have been left? When better saints than you were snatched away from earthly ties and creature kindred,—when brighter stars than you were enclouded in night, were you permitted still to shine with your poor flickering ray? Why was it, great God? Why am I now left? Let me ask myself that question. In sparing me so long, my Lord, hast thou not something more for me to do? Is there not some purpose, as yet unconceived in my soul, which thou wilt yet suggest to me, and to carry out which thou wilt yet give me grace and strength, and spare me a little while longer? Am I yet immortal, or shielded at least from every arrow of death, because my work is incomplete? Is the tale of my years prolonged because the full tale of the bricks hath not yet been made up? Then show me what thou wouldst have me do? Since thus I have been left, help me to feel myself a specially-consecrated man, left for a purpose, reserved for some end, else I had been worms' meat years ago, and my body had crumbled back to its mother earth. Christian, I say, always be asking yourself this question; but especially be asking it when you are preserved in times of more than ordinary sickness and mortality. If I am left, why am I left? Why am I not taken home to heaven? Why do I not enter into my rest? Great Lord and Master, show me what thou wouldst have me do, and give me grace and strength to do it.

Let us change the retrospect for a moment, and look upon the sparing mercy of God in another light. "I was left." Some of you now present, whose history I well know, can say, "I was left," and say it with peculiar emphasis. You were born of ungodly parents; the earliest words you can recollect were base and blasphemous, too bad to repeat. You can remember how the first breath your infant lungs received was tainted air,—the air of vice, of sin, and iniquity. You grew up, you and your brothers and your sisters, side by side; you filled the home with sin, you went on together in your youthful crimes, and encouraged each other in evil habits. Thus you grew up to manhood, and then you were banded together in ties of obliquity as well as in ties of consanguinity. You added to your number; you took in fresh associates. As your family circle increased, so did the flagrancy of your conduct. You all conspired to break the Sabbath; you devised the same scheme, and perpetrated the same improprieties. Perhaps you can recollect the time when Sunday invitations used always to be sent, a sneer at godliness was couched in the invitations. You recollect how one and another of your old comrades died; you followed them to their graves, and your merriment was checked a little while, but it soon broke out again. Then a sister died, steeped to the mouth in infidelity; after that, a brother was taken; he had no hope in his death, all was darkness and despair before him. And so, sinner, thou hast outlived all thy comrades. If thou art inclined to go to hell, thou must go there

along a beaten track: a path which, as thou lookest back upon the way thou hast trodden, is stained with blood; for thou canst remember how all that have been before thee have gone to the long home in dismal gloom, without a glimpse or ray of joy.

And now thou art left, sinner; and, blessed be God, it may be you can say, "Yes, and I am not only left, but I am here in the house of prayer; and if I know my own heart, there is nothing I should hate so much as to live my old life over again. Here I am, and I never believed I should ever be here. I look back with mournfulness indeed upon those who have departed; but, though mourning them, I express my gratitude to God that I am not in torments,—not in hell,—but still here; yea, not only here, but having a hope that I shall one day see the face of Christ, and stand amidst blazing worlds robed in his righteousness and preserved by his love." You have been left, then; and what ought you to say? Ought you to boast? Oh, no; be doubly humble! Should you take the glory to yourself? No; put the crown upon the head of free, rich, undeserved grace. And what should you do above all other men? Why, you should be doubly pledged to serve Christ. As you have served the devil through thick and thin, until you came to serve him alone, and your company had all departed, so, by divine grace, may you be pledged to Christ,—to follow him, though all the world should despise him, and to hold on to the end, until, if every professor should be an apostate, it might yet be said of you at the last, "He was left; he stood alone in sin while his comrades died; and then he stood alone in Christ when his companions deserted him." Thus of you it should ever be said, "He was left."

This suggests also one more form of the same retrospect. What a special providence has watched over some of us, and guarded our feeble frames! There are some of you, in particular, who have been left to such an age that, as you look back upon your youthful days, you recall far more of kinsfolk in the tomb than remain in the world, more under the earth than above it. In your dreams you are the associates of the dead. Still you are left. Preserved amidst a thousand dangers of infancy, then kept in youth, steered safely over the shoals and quicksands of an immature age, and over the rocks and reefs of manhood, you have been brought past the ordinary period of mortal life, and yet you are still here. Seventy years exposed to perpetual death, and yet preserved till you have come almost, perhaps, to your fourscore years. You have been left, my dear brother, and why are you left? Why is it that brothers and sisters are all gone? Why is it that the ranks of your old school-mates have gradually thinned? You cannot recollect one, now alive, who was your companion in youth. How is it that now, you, who have lived in a certain quarter so long, see new names there on all the shop doors, new faces in the street, and everything new to what you once saw in your young days? Why are you spared? Are you an unconverted man? Are you an unconverted woman? To what end are you spared? Is it that you may at the eleventh hour be saved? God grant it may be so! Or art thou spared till thou shalt have sinned thyself into the lowest depths of hell, that thou

mayest go there the most aggravated sinner because of oft-repeated warnings as often neglected;—art thou spared for this, or is it that thou mayest yet be saved?

But art thou a Christian? Then it is not hard for thee to answer the question, "Why art thou spared?" I do not believe there is an old woman on earth, living in the most obscure cot in England, and sitting this very night in the dark garret, with her candle gone out, without means to buy another,—I do not believe that old woman would be kept out of heaven five minutes unless God had something for her to do on earth; and I do not think that yon grey-headed man would still be preserved here unless there was somewhat for him to do. Tell it out, tell it out, thou aged man; tell the story of that preserving grace which has kept thee up till now. Tell to thy children and to thy children's children what a God he is whom thou hast trusted. Stand up as a hoary patriarch, and tell how he delivered thee in six troubles, and in seven suffered no evil to touch thee, and bear to coming generations thy faithful witness that his word is true, and that his promise cannot fail. Lean on thy staff, and say, ere thou diest in the midst of thy family, "Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised." Let thy ripe days bring forth a mellow testimony to his love; and as thou hast more and more advanced in years, so be thou more and more advanced in knowledge and in confirmed assurance of the immutability of his counsel, the truthfulness of his oath, the preciousness of his blood, and the sureness of the salvation of all those who put their trust in him. Then shall we know that thou art spared for a high and noble purpose indeed. Thou shalt say it with tears of gratitude, and we will listen with smiles of joy,—“I was left.”

II. I must rather suggest these retrospects than follow them up, though, did time permit, we might well enlarge abundantly, and therefore I must hurry on to invite you to A PROSPECT.

You and I shall soon pass out of this world into another. This life is, as it were, but the ferry boat; we are being carried across, and we shall soon come to the true shore, the real *terra firma*, for here there is nothing that is substantial. When we shall come into that next world, we have to expect, by-and-by, a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust; and in that solemn day we are to expect that all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall be gathered together in one place. And he shall come, who came once to suffer, he shall come to judge the world in righteousness, and the people in equity. He who came as an infant shall come as the Infinite. He who lay wrapped in swaddling bands shall come girt about the paps with a golden girdle, with a rainbow wreath, and robes of storm. There shall we all stand, a vast, innumerable company; earth shall be crowned from her valley's deepest base to the mountain's summit, and the sea's waves shall become the solid standing-place of men and women who have slept beneath its torrents. Then shall every eye be fixed on him, and every ear shall be open to him, and every heart shall watch with solemn awe and dread suspense for the transactions of that greatest of all days, that day of days, that sealing up of the ages, that completing of the dispensation.

In solemn pomp the Saviour comes, and his angels with him. You hear his voice as he cries, "Gather together the tares in bundles to burn them." Behold the reapers, how they come with wings of fire! See how they grasp their sharp sickles, which have long been grinding upon the millstone of God's longsuffering, but have become sharpened at the last. Do you see them as they approach? There they are mowing down a nation with their sickles. The vile idolaters have just now fallen, and yonder a family of blasphemers has been crushed beneath the feet of the reapers. See there a bundle of drunkards being carried away upon the reapers' shoulders to the great blazing fire. See again, in another place, the whoremonger, the adulterer, the unchaste, and such like, tied up in vast bundles,—bundles the withs of which shall never be rent,—and see them cast into the fire, and see how they blaze in the unutterable torments of that pit: and shall I be left? Great God, shall I stand there wrapped in his righteousness alone, the righteousness of him who sits as my Judge erect upon the judgment seat? Shall I, when the wicked shall cry, "Rocks, hide us; mountains, on us fall;" gaze upon him; shall this eye look up, shall this face dare to turn itself to the face of him that sits upon the throne? Shall I stand calm and unmoved amidst universal terror and dismay? Shall I be numbered with the goodly company, who, clothed with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, shall await the shock, shall see the wicked hurled to destruction, and feel and know themselves secure?

Shall it be so, or shall I be bound up in a bundle to burn, and swept away for ever by the breath of God's nostrils, like the chaff driven before the wind? It must be one or the other; which shall it be? Can I answer that question? Can I tell? I can tell it,—tell it now,—for I have in this very chapter that which teaches me how to judge myself. They who are preserved have the mark on their foreheads, and they have a character as well as a mark, and their character is, that they sigh and cry for all the abominations of the wicked. Then, if I hate sin, and if I sigh because others love it,—if I cry because I myself through infirmity fall into it,—if the sin of myself and the sin of others is a constant source of grief and vexation of spirit to me, then have I that mark and evidence of those who shall neither sigh nor cry in the world to come, for sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Have I the blood-mark on my brow to-day? Say, my soul, hast thou put thy trust in Jesus Christ alone, and as the fruit of that faith, has thy faith learned how to love, not only him that saved thee, but others, too, who as yet are unsaved? And do I sigh and cry within while I bear the blood-mark without? Come brother, sister, answer this for thyself, I charge thee; I charge thee do so, by the tottering earth, and by the ruined pillars of heaven, that shall surely shake; I pray thee, by the cherubim and seraphim that shall be before the throne of the great Judge; by the blazing lightnings, that shall then illumine the thick darkness, and make the sun amazed, and turn the moon into blood; by him whose tongue is like a flame, like a sword of fire; by him who shall judge thee, and try thee, and read thy heart, and declare thy ways, and divide unto thee thine eternal portion; I conjure thee, by the certainties

of death, by the sureness of judgment, by the glories of heaven, by the solemnities of hell,—I beseech, implore, command, entreat thee,—ask thyself now, “ Shall I be left? Do I believe in Christ? Have I been born again? Have I a new heart and a right spirit? Or, am I still what I always was,—God’s enemy, Christ’s despiser, cursed by the law, cast out from the gospel, without God and without hope, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel? ”

I cannot speak to thee as earnestly as I would to God that I could. I want to thrust this question into your very loins, and stir up your heart’s deepest thoughts with it. Sinner, what will become of thee when God shall winnow the chaff from the wheat, what will be thy portion then? Thou that standest in the aisle yonder, what will be thy portion, thou who art crowded there, what will thy portion be, when he shall come, and nothing shall escape his eye? Say, shalt thou hear him? Say, and shall thy heart-strings crack whilst he utters the thundering sound, “ Depart, ye cursed ; ” or shall it be thy happy lot—thy soul transported all the while with bliss unutterable—to hear him say, “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ”? Our text reveals a prospect, I pray you to look at it, gaze across the narrow stream of death, and say, “ Shall I be left? ”

“ When thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come,
To fetch thy ransom’d people home,
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die,
Be found at thy right hand? ”

“ I love to meet among them now,
Before thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all :
But can I bear the piercing thought,—
What if my name should be left out,
When thou for them shalt call? ”

“ Prevent, prevent it by thy grace ;
Be thou, dear Lord, my hiding-place,
In this the accepted day :
Thy pardoning voice, oh let me hear !
To still my unbelieving fear ;
Nor let me fall, I pray. ”

III. But now we come to A TERRIBLE CONTRAST, which I think is suggested in the text: “ I was left. ”

Then there will be some who will not be left in the sense we have been speaking of, and yet who will be left after another and more dreadful manner. They will be left by mercy, forsaken by hope, given up by friends, and become a prey to the implacable fury, to the sudden, infinite, and unmitigated severity and justice of an angry God. But they will not be left or exempted from judgment, for the sword shall find them out, the vials of Jehovah shall reach even to their heart. And that flame, the pile whereof is wood, and much smoke, shall suddenly devour them, and that without remedy.

Sinner, thou shalt be left. I say, thou shalt be left of all those fond joys that thou huggest now,—left of that pride which now steels thy heart; thou wilt be low enough then. Thou wilt be left of that iron constitution which now seems to repel the darts of death. Thou shalt be left of those companions of thine that entice thee on to sin, and harden thee in iniquity. Thou shalt be left by those who promise to be thy helpers at the last. They shall need helpers themselves, and the strong man shall fail. Thou shalt be left, then, of that pleasing fancy of thine, and of that merry wit which can make sport of Bible truths, and mock at divine solemnities. Thou shalt be left, then, of all thy buoyant hopes, and of all thy imaginary delights. Thou shalt be left of that sweet angel, Hope, who never forsaketh any but those who are condemned to hell. Thou shalt be left of God's Spirit, who sometimes now pleads with thee. Thou shalt be left of Jesus Christ, whose gospel hath been so often preached in thine ear. Thou shalt be left of God the Father; he shall shut his eyes of pity against thee, his bowels of compassion shall no more yearn over thee; nor shall his heart regard thy cries. Thou shalt be left; but, oh! again I tell thee, thou shalt not be left as one who hath escaped; for, when the earth shall open to swallow up the wicked, it shall open at thy feet, and swallow thee up. When the fiery thunderbolt shall pursue the spirit that falls into the pit that is bottomless, it shall pursue thee, and reach thee, and find thee. When God rendeth the wicked in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver, he shall rend thee in pieces; he shall be unto thee as a consuming fire, thy conscience shall be full of gall, thy heart shall be drunken with bitterness, thy teeth shall be broken even as with gravel stones, thy hopes riven with his hot thunderbolts, and all thy joys withered and blasted by his breath.

O careless sinner, mad sinner, thou who art dashing thyself now downward to destruction, why wilt thou play the fool at this rate? There are cheaper ways of making sport for thyself than this. Dash thy head against the wall; go scrabble there, and, like David, let thy spittle fall upon thy beard, but let not thy sin fall upon thy conscience, and let not thy despite of Christ be like a millstone hanged about thy neck, with which thou shalt be cast into the sea for ever. Be wise, I pray thee. O Lord, make the sinner wise; hush his madness for a while; let him be sober, and hear the voice of reason; let him be still, and hear the voice of conscience; let him be obedient, and hear the voice of Scripture! "Thus saith the Lord, because I will do this, consider thy ways." "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

I do feel that I have a message for someone to-night. Though there may be some who think the sermon not appropriate to a congregation where there is so large a proportion of converted men and women, yet what a large proportion of ungodly ones there is here, too! I know that you come here, many of you, to hear some funny tale, or to catch at some strange, extravagant speech of one whom you repute to be an eccentric man. Ah, well, he is eccentric, and

hopes to be so till he dies; but it is simply eccentric in being in earnest, and wanting to win souls! O poor sinners, there is no odd tale I would not tell if I thought it would be blessed to you! There is no grotesque language which I would not use, however it might be thrown back at me again, if I thought it might but be serviceable to you. I set not my account to be thought a fine speaker; they that use fine language may dwell in the king's palaces. I speak to you as one who knows he is accountable to no man, but only to his God, as one who shall have to render his account at the last great day. And, I pray you, go not away to talk of this and that which you have remarked in my language. Think of this one thing, "Shall I be left? Shall I be saved? Shall I be caught up and dwell with Christ in heaven, or shall I be cast down to hell for ever and ever?" Turn over these things. Think seriously of them. Hear that voice which says, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Give heed to the voice which expostulates, "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." How else shall your life be spared when the wicked are judged? How else shall you find shelter when the tempest of divine wrath rages? How else shall you stand in the lot of the righteous at the end of the days?

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

EPHESIANS I.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The apostle desires just the same blessing for us, who are "the faithful in Christ Jesus," as he did for the saints at Ephesus. He longs that we also may be filled with grace and peace "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And the wish of the apostle is according to the will of God, who would have us abound in grace and in peace. Some of you Christian people are troubled in mind, yet your Lord said to his disciples, and through them to you, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jesus knew that, in the world, you should have tribulation; but he willed that, in him, you should have peace; and the way to get that peace is by getting grace. "Grace be to you, and peace." The more gracious you are, the more easily will you bear the trying circumstances which surround you. Look not for peace apart from grace; but when you have grace, you have a right to peace.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

I notice how often, in the Epistles, benedictions are followed by doxologies; this is because the true heart loves to bless the Lord. What a rich treasure we have who are blessed "with all spiritual blessings"! There is nothing we can need but what is provided for us by our gracious God. Why are you poor, then, when God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"? Is it not because you

often forget to go to the heavenlies in Christ, and begin looking to the earthlies in yourselves? There is nothing but starvation there, but all true riches are found in the heavenlies in Christ.

4. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love :*

The apostle did not ignore the glorious and blessed doctrine of divine election ; he delighted to meditate upon it, and to speak of it. I wish that some Christians, nowadays, were not so much afraid of it. All spiritual blessings come to us in this way, this is the fountain-head of all favour and grace : "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." The object of our election, that to which God hath chosen us in Christ is, "that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love." Unless thou art holy, how canst thou talk of being chosen of God, for the elect are chosen unto holiness, chosen to be delivered from all blame through the love and grace of God.

5, 6. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

It is well said, by an old writer, that there is no book which is written with such brevity as the Bible ; it seems to give us the condensed essence of truth in the smallest possible space. What a mass of thought there is in those few lines which I have just read to you ! We see here that we become the children of God by adoption, whatever the universal Fatherhood people may say : "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself ;" and that this adoption is the result of predestination, and is not because of our own merits, but "according to the good pleasure of his will." Some systems of theology have much of logic, but little of God ; but, in Paul's teaching, it is God first, and last, and midst, and over all.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace." What a wonderful expression this is,—not only "the glory of his grace," but the praise of that glory ! God has done all things with a view to magnifying his grace in the hearts of the sons and daughters of men : "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." There seems to me to be a sacred poem in these words, "accepted in the Beloved." To my heart, there is more heavenly music in those four words than in any oratorio I ever heard. "Accepted in the Beloved." Oh, what honey this is in the mouth, what cheer this is in the heart ! Are all of you, dear friends, "accepted in the Beloved" ?

7, 8. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence ;*

Wisdom and prudence are two of the handmaids of grace. Grace reigns through righteousness, and the wisdom and prudence of God are set to work so to conduct the whole of the arrangements that "the glory of his grace" may be all the more conspicuous.

9. *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself :*

Even our knowledge of God's will is the result of "his good pleasure." If your eyes have been divinely opened, you see the will of God coming in everywhere, and ordering all things according to his gracious and unerring purpose.

10. *That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him :*

All the things that are in Christ shall be gathered together ; none of

them shall be left out. His great covenant work shall be, in all respects, fully accomplished; there shall be no failure in any point. Whether in heaven, or on earth, the things which are in Christ shall be gathered together in One, "even in him:"—

11. *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

How the apostle delights to harp upon this theme! The Holy Spirit knew that a time would come when men would put a slur upon this glorious truth, so he inspired his servant to set it forth as the very brightness of the sun in the spiritual firmament: "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

12—14. *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Twice more, in these three verses you have this expression, "to the praise of his glory," making a third time with that which he said before, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." The true gospel glorifies God. False gospels may have what is called "the enthusiasm of humanity" about them, but the true gospel has an enthusiasm for the living God, and it magnifies and glorifies him. Note, O believers, that you first trust in Christ, and after that you have the seal of the Spirit. There are some who look for the sealing of the Spirit before believing in Jesus; but neither God nor man will set a seal to a blank paper; there must be the writing of faith upon the heart, and then the Spirit of God comes in, with his blessed seal, and sets it at the bottom as his divine and gracious token of acceptance. The Holy Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance." Now, an earnest is a part of the possession itself; it is not simply a pledge, it is more than that; so the Holy Ghost in our heart is heaven begun below, it is the young dawn of the everlasting day. Blessed be God, we have his Spirit within us, and we rejoice in his indwelling.

15—17. *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:*

You do know him, for he has saved you; now go on to know a great deal more of him. You can scarcely have a better gift than this, "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." The knowledge of Christ crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences. It is better to be well acquainted with Christ than to be a very Solomon concerning all other things, yet not to know him.

18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;*

You have eyes; God's grace has given them to you; but they are capable of additional power and force; and there is the telescope of faith, which you are allowed to use, which will enable you to see much more than you have ever seen as yet.

18. *That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,—*

First, you are to know what your inheritance is; that is "the hope of his calling;" and, next, you are to know what Christ's inheritance in you is, which is another thing. It is a most blessed subject for meditation that you are Christ's, altogether Christ's, and that all you are to be, will be

Christ's, and that in you, poor creatures though you are, he will yet have a rich inheritance. Paul would have you know what are "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"—

19. *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,*

It takes a great deal of grace to make a believer, and to keep a believer; nothing but the almighty power of God can do it.

19, 20. *According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,—*

Not only raising him from the dead, but lifting him up to his own right hand, and setting him there, "in the heavenly places,"—

21. *Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come :*

The power of God, which works in a believer, is the same power with which he raised Christ from the dead, and set him in this pre-eminent place.

22. *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,*

This power is also to be seen working in you who believe in Jesus. What wonders of grace we shall be when God has exerted that stupendous and amazing energy, in each one of us, even as in his own Son! What an inheritance Christ will have in us then!

23. *Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

Said I not truly to you that this blessed Book is full of truth put into as few words as possible? Verily, there is none like it. Other books, at the best, are like gold hammered out very thin; but here you have ingots of solid spiritual wealth, priceless in value. God help us all to make them our own treasure, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXTRACTS FROM "NOTICES OF BOOKS" IN "THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL," NOVEMBER, 1902:—

Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have ready for publication *John Ploughman's Almanack for 1903* and *Spurgeon's Illustrated Almanack for 1903*, price one penny each. It is believed that both will prove to be fully equal to former issues. The pictures on the broadsheet are just the kind that "John Ploughman" used to select, the four short articles are extracts from his writings, and the proverbs still continue to be largely those that were composed or chosen by him. In the little book, five of the articles bear the familiar initials, C. H. S.; Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon has selected the daily texts, and written the letter concerning them; the other contents of the booklet will help to keep it well up to the mark attained in previous years.

Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have added three more volumes to their *Twelve Sermons Series*,—*Twelve Sermons on Humility*, *Twelve Sermons on Precious Promises*, and *Twelve Sermons on the Doctrines of Grace*,—making 51 volumes in this handy form, any one of which can be obtained of the publishers for a shilling, or post free for 1s. 2d.