

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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GOD COMFORTING HIS PEOPLE.

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## A Sermon

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“The Lord hath comforted his people.”—Isaiah xlix. 13.

The joy of the prophet was too great for him to give adequate expression to it with his own solitary tongue; and, therefore, he would have even the angels of God and the redeemed from among men in heaven to praise the Lord for his superabounding mercy. He would also have the redeemed upon earth, and all the works of God's hands take up the joyful strain of praise to the Most High; and he would have even the great mountainous masses of inanimate nature find tongues wherewith to express the greatness of God's lovingkindness and tender mercy in having comforted his people.

And, when we come to think of it aright, we see at once that it is a theme for wonder, worthy of the consideration of heaven and of earth, that ever the infinite God should stoop so low as to comfort finite and fallible creatures such as we are. Had he nothing better than that to do? Were there no more worlds to be created? Were there no other deeds of power and glory to be performed that he must needs come to this poor earth, to comfort the sick, and the sad, and the sorrowing; to speak comfortably even to those who had rebelled against him, and to give them peace and joy when their penitent hearts were breaking in earnest longing for his pardoning mercy? That is a wonderful passage in the 147th Psalm: “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” He is truly great in the majesty of his power, but he is equally great in the condescending character of his love; and as “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” when Jehovah's great creative works were wrought, let them not be slack in their music when his condescending works are wrought,—when, from the highest heavens, he stoops to the couch of deepest woe, to lift us up from our sins and sorrows by the power of his eternal love.

No. 3,012.

Taking the text somewhat out of its immediate connection, and speaking simply upon these six words, "The Lord hath comforted his people," we see that, in the first place, *the Lord has a people*; secondly, *they are a people who need to be comforted*; and, thirdly, *the Lord gives them the comfort that they need*.

I. First, then, it is clear, from the very wording of our text, that **THE LORD HAS A PEOPLE**. Isaiah does not say, in general terms, that the Lord hath comforted the children of men as a whole; but he says, "the Lord hath comforted *his people*." Here is, as Dr. Watts says,—

"A garden wall'd around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground;  
A little spot, enclosed by grace  
Out of the world's wide wilderness;"—

and it is concerning this particular portion of the human race,—selected and elected by God,—that the prophet was moved by the Holy Ghost to write, "the Lord hath comforted his people."

Observe, in the first place, that the children of God are "his people" in this sense, that *they enjoy his special love*. Never let us doubt the universal benevolence of God. Let us hold it as a fundamental doctrine that "the Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works;" and let us firmly believe that, if any man shall be consigned to eternal misery, it will be because it is just that he should so suffer, and he has brought his terrible doom upon his own head; for, as the apostle Peter tells us, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet we must never forget that, inside this universal love, there is a private, secret, distinguishing, discriminating love, which is set only upon those whom God chose, before the foundation of the world, to be his own peculiar people. Paul writes to his son Timothy, "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe;" and Moses, long before, was inspired to write, "The Lord's portion is his people." There is something peculiarly personal in his affection for them. He is kind and generous to all his creatures; but he is lavishly liberal to his own people, and Paul bids us imitate him when he says, "Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

The Lord, then, has a people whom he regards with a special love which is not shed abroad in the hearts of others. These people he set apart for himself from eternity. They are a people who are near and dear unto him, to whom he says, by the pen of the apostle Peter, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

They are not only God's people because he has thus chosen them unto himself, but because, having fallen into sin, they are now his by *particular and special redemption*. Again let me remind you that the Scriptures plainly teach us that the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ has a universal bearing; and it seems to me that those

who limit the value of the atonement do most seriously err from the faith. I believe the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was so infinite that, if there had been ten thousand worlds full of sinners to have been redeemed, it was amply sufficient to have redeemed them all. Paul writes to Timothy, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time;" and I am not wont to put a limit where I see no limit put by God's Word. Yet, notwithstanding that truth, you cannot read the Scriptures diligently, and study them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without learning that there is a special aim and object in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He himself said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." The singers in heaven, in their new song, declare that "these were redeemed from among men;"—they were bought out of the great mass of mankind, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold; . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Paul says that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."

The special object of Christ, in coming to this world, was that he might "save his people from their sins." That is the very meaning of his name Jesus. It is in them that redemption attains its great end. It is in them that Christ sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. It is for each of them, personally and individually, that the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood on Calvary, with the distinct purpose of saving them. Christ did not die for Judas as he did for Peter; he did not shed his blood for Demas as he shed it for Paul. There is, in the redemptive work of Christ, an inner and select circle, into which none but those who are spiritually quickened by the Spirit of God are ever privileged to enter; and herein, beloved, we see that God has a people who are specially his,—a people specially loved and specially redeemed.

These same people, too, *are specially called by the Spirit of God.* Again, to keep up the parallel with which I commenced, let me remind you that all sinners are called to repentance and faith in Christ wherever the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed. It is true that Christ himself said, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" yet the call of the gospel is a universal call to all mankind. Wisdom truly says, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men;" but, beloved, there is another call, a special, peculiar, personal, effectual call, by which only the Lord's chosen and redeemed people are called out from among the mass of men by whom they are surrounded. The New Testament title for the Church of Christ is the *ecclesia*,—the assembly of those who are called out" from among men by the distinguishing grace of God. The Holy Spirit has breathed upon those who were, spiritually, like the dry bones in the valley, and they have "stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Though they were, once, heirs of wrath even as others, and far off from God by wicked works, they have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ, and now they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." They are now regenerated, quickened, and so completely changed that "all things

have become new " with them. They now enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a way of which others know nothing at all. The Holy Spirit may "strive" with some men who ultimately perish, yet he does not operate upon them as he does upon those in whom he works effectually, making them what he would have them to be, without violating their wills, yet so effecting the divine purpose as to constrain them to be obedient to the will of the Most High.

These, then, are the Lord's people,—specially loved, specially redeemed, and specially called.

Besides that, *they are specially cared for in the world.* God's providential care extends, not only to the righteous, but also to the wicked; ay, and not only to the wicked among men, but to the very beasts of the field. You know what I said to you, the other Sabbath morning, about the God who maketh the grass to grow for the cattle.\* It is the same great Provider who feedeth the young ravens when they cry, and the hungry lions when they roar for their food. God's providence not only extends to mankind in general, and to the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the innumerable fish in the sea, but also to every atom of matter in the universe. The grain of dust that is blown from the threshing-floor is steered as certainly as "the stars in their courses." It is the same God who provides for the little and for the great,—though all must be infinitely little to him who alone is great. Yet, while all that I have said is true, we cannot read the Bible without knowing that there is a special providence ever watching over and caring for the people of God. That comforting assurance in Psalm xxxiv. 7 applies not to all men, but only to some men: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about *them that fear him*, and delivereth *them.*" Then there is that cheering question concerning the holy angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister"—not for all men, but—"for *them who shall be heirs of salvation?*" Turn to Romans viii. 28: "We know that all things work together for good"—to whom? Not to every son or daughter of Adam, but—"to *them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*" The wheels of divine providence are like those wheels which Ezekiel saw,—full of eyes; but every one of those eyes gazes upon everything out of love to the chosen people of God, who are thus specially cared for, as well as specially loved, specially redeemed, and specially called.

I need not try to describe the sense in which the saints are to be God's people *throughout the never-ending eternity of bliss which is specially reserved for them.* It will suffice if I remind you that God has said of them that they are to be his special treasure, his royal regalia, his crown jewels: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Just as a man sometimes says of a certain thing that he prizes beyond everything else, "I will give all else away, but I will reserve this for myself;" so, God gives to kings and princes

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\* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 757, "In the Hay-field."

the power to rule in the world, he frequently gives to the ungodly the very fat of the land, and he gives away everything but his people, and of them he says, "They shall be mine." He claims such complete ownership of them that he will never give them away. For them, the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, and lived, and loved, and laboured, and died. For them, that same Jesus still lives to plead before his Father's throne above. Their names are graven on his hands, and on his heart. He carries them upon his shoulders as the shepherd carries the sheep that was lost, and he will never let go his hold of any one of them till he has brought it home, and called together the holy angels and the redeemed from among men, and said to them, "Rejoice with me; for I have found *my sheep which was lost.*"

Thus I have shown you that God has a people.

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, because I do not want to make the roll of lamentation too long, **THEY ARE A PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE COMFORTED.**

You never find God giving any blessings that are not really required. "Works of supererogation" are talked of by fools and knaves, but such works are never performed by God, nor by man either. So that, when the Lord comforts his people it is because they need comfort.

If I began to tell you why the people of God need to be comforted, you would think that I was attempting a work of supererogation! You do not need to be told *that*; some of you can find reasons enough, in your own recollections, to assure you that the people of God often need comfort. Yet I may, perhaps, give you one or two reasons that occur to me.

We need comfort *because we are in the vale of tears.* We do not travel long in that gloomy valley without finding that the dewdrops of tears are hanging thickly, every morning and every evening, upon the briers and the brambles by the wayside. Many of you have troubles in your family, and these are very heavy troubles. Some of you have dead crosses in the form of those who have been taken from you, and living crosses—which are much heavier to carry,—in the form of those who seem only to live to trouble you. Others of you meet with serious losses in your business, and you have to ask how that bill is to be met, and how that liability can be honourably discharged. There are troubles in the house, and troubles in the field; troubles on the land, and troubles on the sea; and, worst of all, there are troubles even in the Church of God.

"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" but *when we were born again, we were born to a double set of troubles.* Both our births bring us troubles; our first birth brings us the troubles that are incident to sin, and our second birth brings us the troubles that are incident to fighting against sin. But, though we get a double share of trouble, we get a double share, a triple share, a sevenfold share, a thousandfold share of joy when we become partakers of the new life in Christ Jesus. There are troubles incident to ordinary manhood, and troubles incident to Christian manhood; but the worst trouble of all is that caused by our inbred

sin. I would not mind all the trouble that comes from the world if I could but get rid of sin;—if I could but live without temptation; or even with temptation if it came from the devil alone. We could manage very well, even with him, if it were not for the evil that is within our own hearts; for we are worse enemies to ourselves than even the devil is to us. Our great enemy cannot do us much harm, if he is kept locked outside the gates, so long as there is no traitor, within the walls of Mansoul, to admit him into the castle of our heart. The sailor does not fear the roaring billows outside his vessel; but when he finds that a leak in the ship gives the water power to rise in the hold, then he begins to fear. And, alas! we have many a leak in the ship of our soul; and, in that way, temptation gets great power over us. We need comfort from God while we are wrestling with inbred sin. That fearful trinity, “the world, and the flesh, and the devil,” will keep a Christian from imagining that this world is his rest, for one or other of them will stuff his pillow with thorns, and make his bed hard for him to lie on, and cause the pilgrimage of his life to be like passing through a hedge of thorns and briers, which lacerate the flesh, and weary the spirit.

The sorrows of God’s people not only come from within and from without, from Satan beneath and from the world around, but they also come from God himself when he chastens his people for their good. Is there any son, anywhere, whom his father chasteneth not? If so, he is not a son of God; for he “scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Amongst the mercies of the covenant, the rod is very conspicuous, and when the Lord chastens us with it, he causes us to smart; yet every twig of the rod is sanctified, and every stroke we receive from it is for our lasting good.

I said that I would not enlarge upon this part of the subject, neither will I; but I know that there is not a little trouble in the lives of many whom I am now addressing. As I look around this area, and these galleries,—though I know far less of many of you than I would like to know, and if there were fewer of you, I could know you better,—I remember some of your sorrows, and I know that many of you are seldom long at ease, yet, with all your troubles, you enjoy that peace which is like a river, for you have learned to drink of that river the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.

III. Now I must pass on to the third point, which is more comforting to us. It is this,—as God has a people who need to be comforted, the prophet Isaiah is inspired to tell us that “THE LORD HATH COMFORTED HIS PEOPLE.”

It is profitable to us to note the various ways in which God has provided for our comfort in our ever-recurring sorrows. He knew that we should have many fountains of grief, and therefore he appointed quite as many fountains of joy, and even more. And besides opening the fountains for us, blessed be his name, he draws the water for us, and puts it to our parched lips, as the Holy Spirit applies to us the precious promises which God has provided for us in his never-failing fount of comfort.

In the first place, in providing for the comfort of his people, *God has been pleased to give us this grand old Book, the Bible.* What a storehouse of comfort this is! Many times have we gone to it, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we have never gone there without finding a portion that just exactly met our needs. Some of you, my brethren and sisters in Christ, are, perhaps, in old Giant Despair's castle; but, if you use this precious Book aright, you will find in it a key that will open every lock in Doubting Castle, and make the way clear for you to pass through the great iron gate. O beloved, what should we do without this Bible of ours? Let us prize it, among other reasons, because through it "the Lord hath comforted his people."

Then he has been also pleased to give us that blessed institution, which is not second in importance even to the Bible, namely, *the mercy-seat.* Wherever we may be, that mercy-seat is always accessible. What a mercy it is that there are no longer any specially holy places, like the temple at Jerusalem; but that—

"Where'er we seek him, he is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

If I thought that I had always to go up to a certain "sacred" building in order to be able to pray to God, or that there were certain "holy" hours in which it was right to pray, I should be often miserable; but it is not so. At midnight, in prison, prayer is in season and in place, for Paul and Silas thus prayed at Philippi, and the prison walls began to shake, and the prison doors flew open. Prayer is in season at all hours, for David says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice." No matter where you are, nor into what state you may have fallen, nor how low and desponding you feel;—and no matter how sinful you are either;—for God has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble;\* I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." After providing for us the mercy-seat, over which is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," surely you may truly say, "The Lord hath comforted his people."

You all know that prayer to God is necessary in great things, but it is equally necessary in little things. None of you doubt that when much is at stake you ought to pray, but you ought equally to pray when little is at stake. I do not think that many true believers go wrong in the difficult places of their pilgrimage, for they kneel down, and ask God's guidance then, and so they go right; but when they get to the very plain places, they think they know all about the road, and then it is that they are sure to make a mistake. The warrior was not slain in battle for want of

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\* Mr. Spurgeon preached a very remarkable sermon upon this text, and published it, under the title of "Robinson Crusoe's Sermon," in a coloured cover, with a striking picture of "Robinson Crusoe" on the front. It is admirably adapted for widespread distribution, with the three others in the same series, "The Turning Point," "The Way of Salvation," and "Jack the Huckster" (all one penny each, or at a reduced rate for quantities).

courage, nor for want of armour; why was he slain then? It was because one nail was missing from his horse's shoe; as the old saying puts it, "For the want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for the want of a shoe, the horse was lost; for the want of a horse, the rider was lost;" and many a Christian has been almost lost "for the want of a nail." Mind that you look after the nails, and take care of them. Take the little things to God in prayer, for the little is the mother of the great, and that of the greater, and even the little is great if we only look at it aright. Just as the brush of a bird's wing sets the first snow-flakes moving, which afterwards accumulate into a ball, which grows into a great mass, which comes rushing down the mountain in a mighty avalanche, so it is the little thing that sets the great in motion, and it is for this that we need particularly to enquire of the Lord.

"There is no sorrow, Lord, too light  
To bring in prayer to thee;  
There is no anxious care too slight  
To wake thy sympathy.

"Thou who hast trod the thorny road  
Wilt share each small distress;  
The love which bore the greater load  
Will not refuse the less."

Beside that, he has been pleased graciously to give us *the means of grace*. I trust that you have often gone out of this house of prayer saying, "Truly, 'the Lord hath comforted his people' this morning;" or, "We have certainly had our burdens taken away from us while we have been listening to his precious truth this evening." When God the Holy Ghost has spoken through the preacher, you have found that the Word preached has been to you a delightful spiritual repast and cordial, so that you have been able, at least for the time, to forget your sorrows.

The Lord has, however, comforted us, in a still higher way, *by forgiving all our sins*. I recollect the time when I would gladly have made a strange bargain with God, if he would have agreed to it. My sin was such an awful burden to me that I thought that, if I might but have it all pardoned, I would even be willing to be imprisoned for a hundred years. If you have ever felt the weight of your sin, you must acknowledge that there is no bodily affliction that is at all comparable to it. If you once really know, by sad personal experience, what the word "guilt" means, if its horrors are clearly revealed to your soul, you will be distracted in mind, and know not what to do, and you will admit that all the griefs that could possibly be heaped upon you could not equal the horror of great darkness which comes over the soul under a sense of sin. But, then, "the Lord *hath* comforted his people," because he has forgiven their sin. Your coat may be threadbare, my brother, but your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake. Your loaf may be but a very small one, and your bed may be a very hard one; but, being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are the very poorest of God's saints, in

pardoning your sins "the Lord hath comforted his people." Is not this the best comfort you could possibly have? Long ago, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." The forgiveness of all their sins is the greatest comfort that the Lord's people can ever enjoy.

Moreover, in addition to giving us the pardon of all our sins, *the Lord has graciously adopted us into his family.* Ah, poor son of toil, your brow may often be covered with sweat, but you shall, by-and-by, be made like unto your Divine Elder Brother, for you have become, by grace, a child of God! How delightful it is to us to know that "we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"! There is no other peace like this, no other joy like this! The angel Gabriel has not half so much reason to be happy as I have. It is true that he has not my cares, nor my troubles; but, then, he is not a child of God, for, as Paul wisely asks, "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?" But he does say that to us who have believed in his Son, Jesus Christ; we are the sons and daughters of the Most High God. The holy angels are highly favoured in having been kept from sinning, yet the Son of God took not up angels, but he became a man, that he might redeem us from destruction; and, through him, we are brought into closer communion with God than the angels ever have. Oh, what cause we have, then, for thankfulness when we think of our adoption as well as of our pardon!

My brethren and sisters in Christ, I have not time even to mention all the blessings which are already in your possession. Truly, the full roll of them would need eternity in which to display it aright before your eyes, "for all things are your's, . . . whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's;" so you have every reason to rejoice, and no cause to be disconsolate, for God has comforted you with the richest of consolations in the blessings which he has already bestowed upon you.

But *think of what is yet to come!* Let the pearly gates be opened for a moment. You will soon be inside them; how soon, none of us can tell. Unless our Lord shall first come,—as he may,—we who have believed in Jesus shall all pass through the gates of pearl, and our disembodied spirits shall see our Saviour face to face! Glory be to God, there is a crown there that no head but yours shall wear, believer, a harp that no hand but yours shall play, a mansion that none but you shall inhabit. Without you, Christ's mystical body would not be complete; one of its members would be missing. Without you, the hallelujah chorus of heaven would lack some of its jubilant notes, and the eternal orchestra would miss one of its players on golden harps; so you must be brought there. The apostle Paul, speaking of glorified saints who have gone to heaven before us, says, "They without us should not be made perfect." They must have us to perfect the company of the redeemed, to gather in glory the full complement of the elect. Come, brethren, put off

your sackcloth and ashes ; take down your harps from the willows ; put away the sackbut, and bring out the psaltery, and all kinds of joyous music, and let us sing, in the words of the familiar hymn,—

“ My God, I'll praise thee while I live,  
And praise thee when I die ;  
And praise thee when I rise again,  
And to eternity.”

Well now, what follows from all that I have been saying to you? This question surely follows,—*who would not be one of the Lord's people?* I pity those of you who have great grief, but no consolation ; I do not know how some of you manage even to live. You work hard, but what do you get by it all,—food and raiment? Yes, and then you go on again and-again, and all your life is like that of the blind horse at the mill, going round, and round, and round, and you never make any real progress. You bring up your children,—in a fashion ; you grow old, and you die, and that is the end. It would be better for you if it were the end ; but, alas! there is something far worse to come. How can you keep on living as you do, without any object beyond this poor grovelling world? I can understand a Christian galley-slave, chained to the oar, and flogged all day long, feeling that he was living up to the dignity of a man in Christ Jesus, for he could say, “ I have a Saviour on high ; and though my legs and wrists are bound, yet my free, immortal spirit has fellowship with the eternal God.” But I cannot understand how men can work on day after day, or, being above work, can roll along in their carriages, and yet have no thought beyond this present, sin-stained world. It is not even fit for immortal spirits to think much about ; it is too base, too scant, too poor, too barren a thing to satisfy immortals! Its atmosphere is a coverlet too narrow for a man to wrap himself in it, and all that earth calls good or great is a bed too short for a never-dying spirit to stretch itself upon it. How do you live without your God? Especially you who are sick and ill ; you young people who have consumption stamped upon your cheeks ; you young men who are mortally ill, and know you must soon depart hence ; you grey-beards, who are not only awaiting the assaults of death, but are already attacked by him ;—how can all of you bear the thought that God's sharp sword of infallible justice is furbished against you? How can you make mirth on the very edge of the bottomless pit? Oh, that you would flee away to Christ, lay hold upon him by a simple faith, and so be saved for ever!

If a man suffers much trouble, some persons draw from that an inference that he is one of God's people. I have sometimes heard very great professors of religion pacify their consciences with the idea that, because they were going through much tribulation, they must therefore inherit the kingdom ;—because they were tried and troubled, they have therefore inferred that they must necessarily be the children of God. Let such understand that there is a rod for the wicked as well as a rod for the righteous. 'Tis true that many go through much tribulation to the kingdom of heaven ;

but it is equally true that many go through all their tribulations to the depths of hell. Well says good Mr. Watson, an old Puritan, "The path to hell is hard and rough to many. Many a man hath gone to perdition in the sweat of his brow, and hath toiled harder to win for himself eternal damnation than ever the Christian hath laboured to serve his Master." I doubt not that this is exactly the truth, or even comes short of it.

There is another thought that is suggested by what I have been saying; it is this, *if God comforts his people, we should imitate him.* If we are his, let us be God-like. I do not know when a man is more like God than when he wipes the tears from a mourner's eyes. God wipes away the tears from all eyes in heaven; so, whenever we have wiped a tear from the eye of a saint here below, we have been doing similar work to God's. If you do not yet know what joy and satisfaction are to be found in helping the fatherless and the widow, I hope you will all soon have that joy and satisfaction by helping them in every way that you can. When you go to visit the widow, and see those many little children, their heads rising one above another like a set of stairs, the father dead, the mother doing a little needlework to provide for her children;—when you see all this, I am sure you will help them all you can. It has been a great joy to some of us, this very night, to receive some six or seven fatherless children into the Orphanage which has yet to be built; and we could not help feeling great joy as we accepted them. There is great joy in helping the fatherless and the widow, relieving the poor and needy, comforting those who are broken-hearted, speaking a cheering word to the mourner, or a guiding word to the soul that is seeking Christ, repeating a word of promise in the ear of a backslider, or of one who, for a while, has lost his evidences. So, my brethren and sisters in Christ, as God has comforted his people, mind that you try to do the same good work, remembering that, in ministering to *them*, you are also ministering to *HIM*, as our hymn puts it,—

"They who feed **THY** sick and faint  
For **THYSELF** a banquet find;  
They who clothe the naked saint  
Round **THY** loins the raiment bind."

And then, finally, *as God has comforted his people, why do they go about the world as if they were not comforted?* I thank God that there are so many members of this church the sight of whose faces is enough to make us glad even in the worst weather. Some of my brethren, when I am the most disconsolate, cheer me up with the very grasp of their hands. These are cheerful Christians, who live near to God, and who so firmly believe in Christ that they will not believe the devil's lie when he tells them that God has forsaken them. Dear brethren and sisters, should we not all try to be like them? It is a great blessing to be of a happy, thankful spirit, and to carry a cheerful countenance wherever we go. Yet some Christians, when you go to see them, are always telling you how poor they are, how badly they have had the

rheumatics, how many aches and pains, and trials and troubles they have, and so on. I remember one visitor, who had heard this sort of story so often from one good old lady whom he used to visit, that one day he said to her, "My dear sister, I have heard all about your troubles so many times that I think I could repeat them word for word; so could you not change the subject for once, and tell me something about your joys?" Whenever we must touch the mournful theme, let us do as the swallow does when it just brushes the brook with its wing, and flies up into the clear air as if its whole being were full of joy. So let it be with us,—touching the waters of trouble sometimes, as we must, yet swiftly mounting in sweet contemplation and holy meditation, leaving the sinful, sorrowing world behind us, and entering into the very presence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"Why should the children of a King  
Go mourning all their days?  
Great Comforter, descend and bring  
Some tokens of thy grace."

God bless you, dear friends, with the Spirit of consolation! The Holy Spirit is *the* Comforter; may he comfort you, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

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