

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“MARVELLOUS THINGS.”

A Sermon

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“O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.”—P'salm xcvi. 1, 2.

THE invitations of the gospel are invitations to happiness. In delivering God's message, we do not ask men to come to a funeral, but to a wedding feast. If our errand were one of sorrow, we might not marvel if men refused to listen to us; but it is one of gladness, not sadness—in fact, you might condense the gospel message into this joyous invitation, “O come, and learn how to sing unto the Lord a new song! Come and find peace, rest, joy, and all else that your souls can desire. Come and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” When the coming of Christ to the earth was first announced, it was not with sad sonorous sounds of devil spirits driven from the nethermost hell, but with the choral symphonies of holy angels who joyfully sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;” and as long as ever the gospel shall be preached in this world, its main message will be one of joy. The gospel is a source of joy to those who proclaim it, for unto us, who are less than the least of all saints, is this grace given—that we should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* The gospel is also a source of joy to all who hear it aright, and accept it, for its very name means “glad tidings of good things.” I feel that, if I am not able to preach to you as I would, yet am I thrice happy in being permitted to preach at all; and if the style and manner of my address may not be such as I desire them to be, nor such as you will commend, yet it will matter but little, for the simplest telling out of the gospel is of itself a most delightful thing; and if our hearts were in a right condition, we should not merely be glad to hear of Jesus over and over again,

* Mr. Spurgeon enlarged upon this theme in two Sermons on Ephesians iii. 8. See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 745, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” and No. 1,209, “A Grateful Summary of Twenty Volumes.”

but the story of the love of our Incarnate God, and of the redemption wrought by Immanuel, would be the sweetest music that our ears ever heard.

In the hope that our hearts may thus rejoice, I am going to talk of many things under two heads. The first is, *the marvellous things which God has done in the person of his Son*; and, secondly, *some marvellous things in reference to ourselves*, which are almost as marvellous as those that God has done.

I. Firstly, I am to call your attention to **THE MARVELLOUS THINGS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT**. If you read it carefully, you will notice that, first, there are some marvellous things that are marvellous in themselves; secondly, some that were marvellous in the way in which they were done: "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory;" and then, thirdly, some that were marvellous as to the way in which they were made known: "The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen."

First, then, we will consider *the things that are marvellous in themselves*: "He hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." You know the story. We were enslaved by sin, we were in such bondage that we were liable to be for ever in chains; but our great Champion undertook our cause, and entered the lists pledged to fight for us till the end; and he has done it. It would have been a cause of great joy if I could have come here, and said to you, "The Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to fight our battles for us;" but I have something much better than that to say. He has fought the fight, and "his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." It must have required more faith to believe in the Christ who was to come than to believe in the Christ who has come. It must have required no little faith to believe in Christ as victorious while he was in the midst of the struggle; for instance, when the bloody sweat was falling amidst the olive trees, or when he was hanging upon the cross, and moaning out that awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the great crisis is past. No longer does the issue of the conflict tremble in the balance; Christ hath for ever accomplished his warfare, and our foes are all beneath his feet.

"Love's redeeming work is done;
Fought the fight, the battle won."

What foes has Christ overcome? Our main foe, our sin, both as to the guilt of it and as to the power of it. As to the guilt of it, there was a law, which we had broken, and which must be satisfied. Christ has kept the positive precepts of that law in his own perfect life, and he has vindicated the honour of that law by his sacrificial death upon the cross. The law, therefore, being satisfied, the strength of sin is gone; and now, O believers, the sins which ye saw in the day of your conviction ye shall see no more for ever! As Moses triumphantly sang of the enemies of the chosen people, "the depths have covered them," so can you say of your sins, "There is not one of them left." Even in God's great

Book of Remembrance there is no record of sin against any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "By him all that believe are justified from all things." Try to realize this, brethren and sisters in Christ. Let the great army of your sins pass before you in review,—each one like a son of Anak, armed to the teeth for your destruction. They have gone down into the depths, and the Red Sea of Christ's blood has drowned them, and so he hath gained a complete victory over all the guilt of sin; and as for the power of sin within us,—alas! we often groan concerning it, but let us groan no longer; or if we do, let us also sing.

The experience of a Christian is summed up in Paul's utterance, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* If you take the whole quotation, I believe you have a summary of a spiritual man's life,—a daily groaning and a daily boasting,—a daily humbling and a daily rejoicing,—a daily consciousness of sin and a daily consciousness of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer it. We do believe, beloved, that our sin has received its death-blow. It still lingers within us, for its death is by crucifixion, and crucifixion is a lingering death. Its heart is not altogether fastened to the cross, but its hands are, so that we cannot sin as we once did. Its feet, too, are fastened, so that we cannot run in the way of transgressors as we once did; and one of these days the spear shall pierce its heart, and it shall utterly die; and, then, with the faultless ones before the throne of God, we shall be unattended by depravity or corruption any longer. Therefore, let us "sing unto the Lord a new song," because his right hand, and his holy arm, have gotten him the victory over sin within us.

"His be the victor's name,
Who fought our fight alone;
Triumphant saints no honour claim;
His conquest was his own."

In connection with sin came death, for death is the daughter of sin, and follows closely upon sin; Jesus has conquered death. It is not possible for believers to die eternally, for Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and even the character of the natural death is changed to believers. It is not now a penal infliction, but a necessary way of elevating our nature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Even those who will be living at the coming of the Lord must be "changed" in order that they may be fit to enter glory. Death, therefore, to believers, is but a putting off of our week-day garments that we may put on our Sabbath attire,—the laying aside of the travel-stained garments of earth that we may put on the pure vestments of joy for ever. So we do not fear death now, for Christ has conquered it. He has rent away the iron bars of the grave, and he has left in the sepulchre his own winding-sheets and

*See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 235, "The Fainting Warrior."

napkin that there may be suitable furniture in what was once a grim, cold, empty charnel-house; and he has gone up into his glory, and left heaven's gate wide open to all believers. Unless he shall first come, we too shall descend into the grave whither he went, but we also shall come up again as he did, and we shall rise complete in the perfection of our redeemed manhood. Then shall we be satisfied, when we awake in the likeness of our Master; so let us "sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things."

"Hosannah to the Prince of light,
Who clothed himself in clay,
Enter'd the iron gates of death,
And tore the bars away!

"Death is no more the king of dread,
Since our Immanuel rose;
He took the tyrant's sting away,
And spoil'd our hellish foes.

"See how the Conqueror mounts a'off,
And to his Father flies,
With scars of honour in his flesh,
And triumph in his eyes"

And as Christ has conquered sin and death, so has he conquered the devil and all his hosts of fallen spirits. This monster of iniquity, this monster of craft and malice has striven to hold us in perpetual bondage; but Christ met him in the wilderness, and vanquished him there; and met him, as I believe, in the garden of Gethsemane, in personal conflict, and vanquished him once for all; and now he has led captivity captive. Inferior spirits were driven away by Christ when he was here upon earth, and they fled at the bidding of the King; and now, although Satan still worries and vexes the saints of God, the Lord will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Therefore, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, this is the joyous news we have to bring to sinners,—that sin, and death, and the devil have all been vanquished by the great Captain of our salvation; and for this let us so rejoice that we sing unto the Lord a new song.

"He hell in hell laid low;
Made sin, he sin o'erthrew:
Bow'd to the grave, destroy'd it so,
And death, by dying slew.

"Sin, Satan, death appear
To harass and appal;
Yet since the gracious Lord is near,
Backward they go, and fall."

But, according to the text, what the Lord did is not only marvellous in itself, but *the way in which he did it was also marvellous*. Observe that he did it alone: "His own right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." No one was associated with

the Lord Jesus Christ in the conquest which he achieved over sin, and death, and the devil, and nothing is more abhorrent to a believing soul than the idea of giving any particle of glory to anyone but the Lord Jesus Christ. He trod the winepress alone, so let him alone wear the crown. Sinner, you have not to look for any secondary Saviour; Christ has done it all. You need pay no reverence to saints, or martyrs, or priests. Christ has done it all, so resort to him for all you want. Christ alone has accomplished the salvation of his people; no other hand has been raised to help him in the fight. Look then to Jesus only for salvation. Trust in him with your whole heart; throw your weight entirely upon him, my poor brother or sister, if you have not yet done so, and you shall find rest and salvation in him.

Another marvel is that he did it all so wisely: “His right hand hath gotten him the victory.” You know that we use the word “dexterous” to signify a thing that is done well; we mean that it was done right-handedly. So Christ fought our battle with his right hand; he did it with ease, with strength, and with infinite wisdom. Salvation is the very perfection of wisdom, because, in the salvation of a sinner, all the attributes of God are equally glorified. There is as much justice as there is mercy in the salvation of a sinner by the atoning sacrifice of Christ,—mercy full-orbed, and justice full-orbed also,—God fulfilling his threatenings against sin by smiting Christ, and giving to the love of his heart full vent in saving the very chief of sinners through the death of his dear Son. The more I consider the doctrine of substitution, the more is my soul enamoured of the matchless wisdom of God which devised this system of salvation. As for a hazy atonement which atones for everybody in general, and for nobody in particular,—an atonement made equally for Judas and for John, I care nothing for it; but a literal, substitutionary sacrifice, Christ vicariously bearing the wrath of God on my behalf, this calms my conscience with regard to the righteous demands of the law of God, and satisfies the instincts of my nature which declare that, as God is just, he must exact the penalty of my guilt. Dear brethren, Jesus Christ, suffering, bleeding, dying, has gotten us the victory. The hand that was pierced by the nails has conquered sin, the hand that was fastened to the wood has fastened up the accusation that was written against us, the hand that bled has brought salvation to us, so that we are Christ’s for ever. ’Twas infinite wisdom which shone in the conquest of sin, and death, and the devil.

But it was holiness too: “His holy arm hath gotten him the victory.” The psalmist seems, as he advances in his Psalms, to fall more and more in love with the matchless holiness of God, and the holiness of the victory of Christ is a great point in its favour. There is never a sinner so saved as to make God even seem to wink at sin. Since the creation of this world, there was never an act of mercy performed by God that was not in perfect harmony with the severest justice. God, though he has loved and saved unholy men, has never stained his holy hands in the act of saving

them. He still remains the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, though he is still very pitiful, and full of compassion, and passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and presses prodigal children to his heart. The atonement of Jesus Christ is the answer to the great question, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth? How can he be perfectly holy, and yet, at the same time, receive into his love, and adopt into his family, those who are unrighteous and unholy?" O Calvary, thou hast solved the problem! The bleeding wounds of the Incarnate God have made righteousness and peace to kiss each other. May God grant to you, unconverted sinner, the grace to understand how he can save you, and yet be perfectly holy, how he can forgive your sins, and yet be perfectly just! I know this is the difficulty that troubles you,—how can you be received while God is what he is? He can receive you, for the Lord Jesus Christ took the sin of his people, and bore it in his own body on the tree, and being the appointed Head of all believers, he has vindicated in his own person the inflexible justice of God. There is the Man who has kept the whole law of God,—not Adam, for he failed to keep it,—but the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; and all whom he represented are now "accepted in the Beloved," made acceptable to God because of what Jesus Christ has done. So let us magnify that holy arm which hath gotten him the victory.

I have now to speak upon the third point, *the marvellous grace which has revealed all this to us*. It is a very familiar thing for us who are sitting here to hear the gospel, but will you just carry your minds back, some two or three thousand years, to the period when this Psalm was written? What was then known concerning salvation was known almost exclusively by the Jews. Here and there, a proselyte was led into the bonds of the covenant; but, for the most part, the whole world lay in heathen darkness. Where there was the seal of circumcision, there were the oracles of God; but as for the sinners of the Gentiles, they knew nothing whatever concerning the truth. And it might have been so till this day if the Lord had not made known his salvation, and openly showed his righteousness in the sight of the heathen. Our present privileges are greater than those of ancient Israel, and I am afraid that we sometimes despise, or at least forget, those whom we have for a time supplanted. They were the favoured people of God, and through their unbelief they have been put away for a while, but Israel is yet to be restored to even greater blessings than it formerly enjoyed.

"The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise,
And thy loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.

"For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates."

Do we value as we ought the privilege we now have of hearing in our own tongue the wonderful works of God? My dear unconverted hearer, how grateful you ought to be that you were not born in Rome, or Babylon, or in the far-off Indies, in those days when there was no Christian missionary to seek you out, and care for your soul, but when the whole of the light that shone was shed upon that little land of Palestine! Jesus Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition, and now it makes no difference whether we are Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, for the gospel is to be preached to every creature in all the world, and “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” whatever his previous character may have been, or to whatever race he may have belonged.

Yet let us never forget that, in order to accomplish this great work of salvation, it was necessary that the blessed Son of God should descend to this world, and it was also necessary that the Spirit of God should be given to rest upon the Church, to be the inspiration by which the gospel should be preached among the heathen. Again let me ask a question. Do we sufficiently reverence the Holy Ghost, and love him as we should for all that he has done? The incarnation of the Son of God is no greater mystery than the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men. It is truly marvellous that the ever-blessed Spirit, who is equally God with the Father and the Son, should come and reside in these bodies of ours, and make them his temple. Yet remember that, if it had not been so, there would have been no effective preaching of the gospel; and, this night, unless the Holy Ghost is here to bless the Word, there will be no open showing of Christ's righteousness to you, and no making known of his salvation to your heart. All the victories of Christ, for which I challenge your grateful songs, would be unknown to you if the Holy Ghost did not touch men's lips so that they might tell what the Lord hath done, and publish abroad his glorious victories.

Remember, too, that, in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit, there has had to be an unbroken chain of divine providence to bring the gospel to you, and to your fellow-countrymen. Look back through the past ages, and see what wonderful revolutions of the wheels full of eyes there have been. Empires have risen, and have fallen, but their rise and fall have had a close connection with the preaching of the gospel. There have been terrific persecutions of the saints of God; Satan has seemed to summon all hell to attack the Church of Christ, yet he could not destroy its life. Then came the night of Popery, dense as the nights of Egypt's darkness; but old Rome could not put out the light of the gospel. Since then, in what marvellous ways has God led his chosen people! He has raised up his servants, one after another, so that the testimony concerning the victories achieved by Christ might be continued among us, and might be spread throughout all the nations of the earth; and thus it comes to pass that, to-night, you have the open Bible in your hands, and I am permitted freely to expound the teaching of that Bible to you. How wonderfully has

the history of our own country been working towards this happy result! Glorify God and bless his holy name that we live in such halcyon days as these when the Lord hath made known his salvation, and hath openly showed his righteousness in the sight of the heathen.

But yet more sweetly let us praise the Lord that we not only live where the gospel is made known, but that God has made it known to some of us in a still higher sense. Some of us now understand, as we did not at one time, the righteousness of God,—his way of making men righteous through Jesus Christ. We understood it in theory long before God made it savingly known in our soul; this is another work of the Holy Spirit for which we have good reason to sing unto the Lord a new song. Sinner, I have to say to you that God has sent the gospel to you to tell you that his Son, Jesus Christ, has conquered sin, and death, and the devil, and that, if you believe in Jesus, you shall be a partaker in his victory. There is nothing for you to do but to believe in him. Even the power to understand his truth is God's gift to you; even the faith that receives it he works in you according to his Spirit. You are to be nothing that God may be everything; it is for you to fall at his feet, with confusion of face and contrition of heart, and when he bids you do so, to rise up and say, "I will sing unto the Lord a new song. O Lord, I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me through him who hath gotten the victory on my behalf."

II. The second point of my subject, on which I must speak very briefly indeed, is this,—THERE ARE SOME MARVELLOUS THINGS IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES.

The first of these marvellous things is that, after all that Christ has done, and the mercy of God in making it known, *so many are utterly careless and indifferent concerning it*. Tens of thousands will not even cross the threshold to go and hear about it. Bibles are in many of their houses, yet they do not take the trouble to read them. If they are going on a railway journey, they consult their *Bradshaw*; but they do not search God's own Guide Book to find the way to heaven, or to learn where and when they must start if they mean to reach that place of eternal happiness and bliss. We can still ask, with Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The most marvellous sight out of hell is an unconverted man; it is a marvel of marvels that the Son of God himself should leave heaven and all its glories, and come to earth to bleed and die, in manhood's shape for manhood's sake, and yet that there should be anyone in the shape of a man who should not care even to hear the story of his wondrous sacrifice, or that hearing the story, should disregard it as if it were of no interest to him. Yet see how men rush to buy a newspaper when there is some little bit of news! With what avidity do some young people, and some old people too, who ought to know better, read the foolish story of a love-sick maid! How freely their tears flow over imaginary griefs! Yet the Lord Jesus

Christ, bleeding to death in disinterested love to his enemies, moves them not to tears, and their hearts remain untouched by the story of his sufferings as if they were made of marble.

The depravity of mankind is a miracle of sin; it is as great a miracle, from one point of view, as the grace of God is from another. Jesus Christ neglected! Eternal love slighted! Infinite mercy disregarded! Ay, and I have to confess, with great shame, that even the preacher of the gospel is not always affected by it as he ought to be; and not only must I, my brethren, confess this, but so must others, I fear, who preach the Word. Why, it ought to make us dance for joy to have to tell you that there is mercy in the heart of God, that there is pardon for sinners, that there is life for the dead, that the great heart of God yearns over sinners; and our hearts ought to be ready to break when we find that men disregard all this good news, and are not affected by it. It is an astounding calamity that men should have fallen so terribly that they are insensible to infinite love. God grant that his grace may show to you, unconverted sinners here, in what a horrible state your hearts must be in that, after all that Christ has done, you still give him no token of gratitude, no song of praise for the wonders he has wrought.

Looking from this point of view, there is another marvellous thing, which is, that *some of us have been so brought to recognize the work of Christ that we are saved by it*; because, to confess the truth, there are some of us who were very unlikely subjects (speaking after the manner of men) to be saved. Probably, each saved person here did think himself the most unlikely one ever to be saved; I know that I thought so concerning myself. You remember the story of a Scotchman who went to see Mr. Rowland Hill, and who sat and looked him in the face for a long while, till the good old minister asked him, "What are you looking at?" He replied, "I have been studying the lines of your face." "What do you make of them?" asked Rowland; and the answer was, "I was thinking what a great vagabond you would have been if the grace of God had not met with you." "That thought has often struck me," said Rowland; and a similar thought has often struck some of us. If we had not been converted, wouldn't we have led others into sin? Wouldn't we have invented fresh pleasures of vice and folly? Who would have stopped us? We had daring enough for anything, enough even to have bearded the very devil himself if we had thought that some new vice could have been invented, or some fresh pleasure of sin could have been discovered. But now that God has made us yield, "by sovereign grace subdued," and brought us to his feet, and put on us the chains which now we gladly welcome, and which we long to wear for ever, O come, and let us sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things for us; "his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory!" Dear child of God, if there be special grace in your case, as I know you feel that there has been, there ought to be special honour given to Christ by you. Everyone who is saved ought to live a very special life,—an extraordinary life.

If you were an extraordinary sinner, or have been, in some way or other, an extraordinary debtor to divine love, may there be some extraordinary devotion, extraordinary consecration, extraordinary faith, extraordinary liberality, extraordinary loving kindness, or something else about you in which the traces of that marvellous right hand of God and his holy arm will be plainly manifested!

The last thing I will speak about is this, *there is something marvellous in the joy which we, who have believed in the victory wrought by Christ, have received.* Probably all of you have sung that song of which the refrain is,—

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

That refrain is very monotonous, yet I think I should like to sing it all night, and should not wish to leave off even when the morning broke.

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

You may turn it over, and over, and over, and over, as long as ever you like, but you will never find anything that makes you so glad as that thought, “Jesus loves me;” and you will never find that the sweetness of that thought, “Jesus loves me,” will ever be exhausted. Sinner, if you only knew the blessedness of the life of Christ, you would be glad enough to run away from your own life, and run to share ours in him! We have peace like a river, we can leave all our cares and our burdens with our God. We are just where we love most to be,—in the bosom of our Heavenly Father, and the Spirit of adoption makes us feel perfectly at home with him. We can say, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!” We are in perfect safety, for who is he that can destroy those whom Christ protects? We have got into peace even with our own conscience. We have also a blessed prospect for the future; we shall be borne along upon the wings of divine providence until we exchange them for the wings of angels. We have a heaven below, and we are looking for a still better heaven above.

“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King.”

This is the lower part of the choir; some of the singers are up in the galleries, and we are learning here the notes that we shall sing above. Come, beloved, let us make these sinners long to share our joys. If any of you saints have been moaning and groaning of late, get into your proper condition. Begin to tune up, and praise the Lord with all your might till the ungodly shall say, “After all, there is something sweeter and brighter and better in the lives of these Christians than we have ever known in ours. But whether you will rejoice or not, my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour; and so I will, by his help, till death suspends these mortal songs, or melts them into the songs immortal before the throne. God bless you, brethren and sisters, for Christ’s sake! Amen.