

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S GLORY IN THE BUILDING UP OF ZION.

A Sermon

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When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."—Psalm cii. 16.

The Lord himself must "build up Zion," or it never will be built up. He first planned it; he is the Architect of his own Church; he digged the foundations; He has supplied the great Corner-stone; he himself, by his own power, creates each living stone, polishes it, and fits it into its place. He cements the whole structure, and as he first sketched the plan, so will he complete it in every iota to the praise and the glory of his wisdom, his grace, and his love. It shall be said of Zion, when all her walls are builded, and all her palaces completed, and when all her happy inhabitants have their mouths filled with song as they walk in white, "The Lord hath built it, from the foundation even to the top-stone." I remember to have seen, close by the side of the Alps, a house which had upon its front words to this effect, "This house was built entirely by the skill, wealth, and industry of its inhabitants." It struck me as not being a very modest thing to put in front of one's house; for, after all, the structure was not very marvellous; but when we look at the glorious architecture of the Church of God, it is no mean part of its lustre that it may fittingly bear such an inscription as this, "This house was built entirely by the wisdom, the munificence, and the power of the infinite Jehovah."

I. But while the text reminds us of this truth, which I hope we never can forget, it also brings to our minds three or four other truths; and the first point of our discourse shall be ZION BUILT UP.

I suppose we shall all consider that one essential to the building up of Zion would be *practical conversion*. It is of small avail for a

man to say he is building up a church where the power of the Holy Ghost is not seen in calling sinners out of darkness into marvellous light. There may be periods in which conversions are few, but if, instead of their being exceptional, this should come to be the rule in one's ministry, there would be grave cause to suspect that God was not working with the minister,—certainly not in the sense of building up the church. We find not unfrequently, in Holy Scripture, that the fathers of households are called "builders", and that the term "the building of a house" is constantly used in respect to the birth and training up of a family. Now, in the great Christian family, our converts are the new-born children, and a family is not built up for God except with these sons and daughters, who are like stones polished after the similitude of a palace. We little know the blessing which young converts bring to us. They quicken the pulse of old Christians; they strengthen and confirm the faith of those who have long been walking in the truth; and they do, as it were, infuse new blood into the fellowship of the saints. They come to us as God's message from on high. They are tokens for good; and whereas we might have thought, perhaps, that the triumphs of the cross were confined to the heroic age, when the Spirit of God was poured out in Pentecostal measure, yet as we see our sons and daughters converted, and the great miracle of regeneration still being performed, we take heart, and are of good courage to go on in the work of the Lord. Conversions we must have, for there is no building up of Zion without them.

And then there must follow conversion *a public confession of faith*. Though the invisible Church of God is built up by conversions, the outward church is only built up as men and women associate together in the holy society which we call "the church." It is the duty of every Christian—nay, it is the instinct of his spiritual life—to avow the faith which he has received, and avowing it, he finds himself associated with others who have made the same profession, and he assists them in holy labour. When he is strong, he ministers of his strength to the weak; and when he is himself weak, he borrows strength from those who just then may happen to be strong in the faith. Where were our Christian institutions if church-fellowship were broken up? Plainly, if it be right for one Christian to remain out of church-fellowship, it is right for all; and then, if there were no churches, there would be no institutions, and where would the gospel itself be? I would not lay too much stress on the church of God, but I venture to ask you, is it not written that she is "the pillar and ground of the truth"? If, then, I withhold my confession of faith, and my personal communion with the visible church, I to that extent weaken the pillar and ground of the faith. We need confessions of faith as well as conversions.

By a church being thus formed in order to its being built up, something more is wanted. *We cannot build without union*. A house is not a load of bricks, neither is the church a mere conglomeration of human beings. A house must have its doors, and its windows, its foundations, its rafters, and its ceiling. So a church must be organized; it must have its distinct offices and officers; it must have

its departments of labour, and proper men must be found, according to Christ's own appointment, to preside over those departments.

Our Saviour was raised up on high to receive gifts for men, and to give gifts to men, and those gifts are, first apostles, then pastors, and teachers, and evangelists, and so on, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Some of the old Roman walls are compacted with such excellent cement that it would be almost impossible to separate one stone from another; in fact, the whole mass has become consolidated like a solid rock, so embedded in cement that you cannot distinguish one stone from another. Happy the church thus built up, where each cares not only for his own prosperity, but for the prosperity of all,—where, if there be any joy in one member, all the members rejoice, and if there be sorrow in any one part of the body, all the rest of the body is in sorrow too, "remembering them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." And yet, what are some churches but semi-religious clubs, mere conventions of people gathered together? They have not in them that holy soul which is the essence of unity; there is no life to keep them in entirety. Why, the body would soon become disjointed, and a mass of rottenness, if the soul were not in it; and if the Spirit of Christ be absent, the whole fabric of the outward church begins to fall to pieces; for where there is no life, there can be no true union.

More than this, to build up a church, there needs to be *edification and instruction in the faith*. It is, I think, a matter for deep regret that this is not an age in which Christian people desire to be edified. It is an age in which they like to have their ears tickled, and delight to have a multiplicity of anecdotes and of exciting metaphors; but they care little to be well instructed in the sound and solid doctrines of the grace of God. In the old Puritanic times, sermons must have been tiresome to the thoughtless; but, nowadays, I should think they are more tiresome to the thoughtful. The Christian of those days wanted to know a great deal of the things of God; and provided that the preacher could open up some mystery to him, or explain some point of Christian practice to make him holier and wiser, he was well satisfied, though the man might be no orator, and might lead him into no fields of novel speculation. Christians then did not want a new faith; but, having received the old faith, they wished to be well rooted and grounded in it, and therefore they sought daily for illumination as well as for quickening; they desired, not only to have the emotions excited, but also to have the intellect richly stored with divine truth; and there must be much of this in every church if it is to be built up. There need certainly be no neglect of an appeal to the passions, and no forgetfulness of what is popular and exciting; but with this we must have the solid bread-corn of the kingdom, without which God's children will faint in the weary way of this wilderness.

It does not strike me, however, that I have yet given a full picture of the building up of a church, for a church such as I have described would not answer the end for which Christ ordained it. Christ ordained his Church to be *his great aggressive agency* in combating with sin, and with the world that lieth in the wicked one. It is to be a light, not to itself, as a candle in a dark lantern, but a light unto that which is without. Albeit we are not saved by works, yet the ultimate result of salvation must always be work. The cause of salvation lies in grace, but the effect of salvation appears in working. As sure as ever the grace of God fills a soul, that soul desires to see others brought in. That respectable church, that wealthy church, which is quite satisfied to have no debt upon its own building, content if its minister be as sparsely remunerated as possible,—without enthusiasm, without zeal, always harping on the string of prudence, conservatism, and orthodoxy, having no care whatever to be aggressive,—such a church needs to be built on other foundations, to get rid of its wood, hay, and stubble, and to be built on gold, and silver, and precious stones, or otherwise it will not honour Christ.

It strikes me that it is necessary for the edification of every Christian man that he should have something to do. We learn to be soldiers by being drilled; nay, the veteran is taught to fight by fighting. I think most ministers know that one of the best methods of learning to preach is to preach, and the best way of learning Christianity is to be a Christian practically. Said one, "If thou wouldst do good, be good." And I have sometimes thought, if we would be good, we must do good; not to make us so, but as the best discipline to keep us in good health and good training. Do not let us hope that we ourselves can be devoted to God except by Christian service; and let us not hope that the church can ever be so devoted except by casting about in the world to do for Christ whatever cometh to its hands.

But I must go yet a step further. After a church has become all that I have been describing, the next thing it ought to do should be to *think of the formation of other churches*. The building up of an empire must often be by colonization. Her Majesty's dominions, upon which we proudly say that "the sun never sets," have been greatly enlarged by the sons and daughters of Britain who have gone to other lands, and the true process of increasing the Church of Christ must be by her forming colonies. Who dares to deny that, in the building of many places of worship in England and elsewhere, the devil has had as much to do as Christ has had; I mean in our denomination, if not in any other? A great number of chapels have been the result of schism, bad spirit, bickering, jealousy, and I know not what,—quarrelling and contending, perhaps, about some points of truth which, if important, could not be so important as the spirit of love and of unity. Many and many a time a house has been dedicated to God, when the first thought that led to it, and the last act that finished it, were simply a thought and an act of pride, or envy, or pure sectarian bigotry, and nothing more. Now, I do not think, although he has no doubt overruled it for good,

that this is legitimate; but for a number of Christian people associated together in a church, and finding that the church has grown strong enough to be able to afford to lose them, for these to swarm off, and form another church, and give of their substance to build another house, seems to me to be a legitimate and proper method in which Zion may be built up in these our realms.

II. THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, CONNECTED WITH JEHOVAH'S BEING GLORIFIED.

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Ah, brethren and sisters! it would need a seraph to tell of all the glory which has come to God through the building up of his Church. Heaven rang with acclamations when the angels first learned that God designed to have a Church on the earth. When they perceived, by the glimmering light of the first promise, that there was to be a Seed of the woman as well as a seed of the serpent, they began to hymn Jehovah's praise; and, when Christ was given, and so the foundation of the Church was actually laid, the glory of creation was eclipsed, and even the splendour of providence might almost have been forgotten in the more transcendent glory of grace. God had done marvellously before, but never did he seem so divine as when he gave his dear Son, and when, in the holy life and dying pangs of the Son of his love, the foundation of the Church was laid.

So, too, God is glorified in every single part of the building of his Church. There is not a stone quarried from the dark pit of nature, or polished by the tools of grace, or put into its position, without fresh honour to God and new glory to his name. He cannot *be* more glorious, but he appears more richly glorious in the building up of his Church. And what will be the glory when the top-stone is brought out,—when the last elect one shall be cemented to the visible whole? What shall be the undying melody, the unceasing song of ages, as to principalities and powers shall be made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God?

Sometimes, however, a suspicion has arisen in the minds of God's people that God was not glorified in his Church; and the text almost seems to hint, not that God is not glorified, but, at any rate, that he is not so much glorified in the Church at one time as at another, for it says, "When the Lord shall build up Zion," as if he were not always building up Zion, at least not to the same extent. We know, from painful experience, that there are lulls, seasons when a dead calm comes over the Church, and then, to the minds of many, God's glory is not revealed. In consequence thereof, the inhabitants of Zion hang their harps upon the willows, and go a-mourning; and yet, had we more faith, and put sense more in the background, we might sing to our Well-beloved a song touching his vineyard, even when the wild boar out of the wood is wasting her, and her hedges are being broken down. The wave recedes, but the tide advances; the day may seem to be dark, but every hour is bringing on the noon. God advances not by little steps. We must not judge him by inches who is not even to be measured by leagues, nor by handfuls when the mountains are too small for his hands, and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Our

belief is that, the whole way through, God is building up his Church, and that he does appear in his glory.

Perhaps one or two thoughts may make this more clear to us. God often appears in glory to me as one of his builders, and I will tell you in what respect. When I have been sitting to see enquirers, I have sometimes found that God has blessed to the conversion of souls some of my poorest sermons,—those which I thought I could weep over, which seemed more than ordinarily weak, and lacking in all the elements likely to make them blessed, except that they were sincerely spoken. When I have seen that the work was done though the workman, naturally weak, was on that occasion more than usually depressed with infirmity, I have only been able to lift up my hands and say, “Now, Lord, thou appearest in thy glory, since thou dost build up Zion, and convert sinners by the most unlikely means, and the truth, apparently when most feebly spoken, works the mightiest results; this is to make thy name glorious indeed!”

Another thing has sometimes made one see God in his glory. Persons have been brought up and educated under sermons that are as hostile to spiritual life as the plague is to natural life. They have, from their youth up, seen religion in all its gaudy show of symbolism, and yet one hearing of the simple gospel has been sufficient for their conversion. Perhaps the mere reading of a single text has untwisted the knots of forty years, and the despotism of the priesthood over the mind has fallen at the touch of a single passage of God’s Word. The case of Luther is one instance of this, and in all such cases God appears in his glory. If you will look at each conversion, and especially at the sudden conversion of those who for long years have been inured to the very reverse of the gospel of Christ, you will see God appearing in his glory.

Think, too, of the agencies which are abroad hostile to the Church of God. The Jews were glad to see the walls of Jerusalem rise, because they remembered Geshem, and Tobiah, and Sanballat, and all the rest that laughed and jeered at them. Up went the walls though these enemies laughed, and the foxes did not break down the wall, though Tobiah so ventured to prophesy. In this age, too, the Church is not without her adversaries, and they are of a very dangerous sort. They are not always outspoken adversaries. Some of them teach us how to doubt;—not because they themselves doubt, they say, but because it is so healthy a thing for our minds to be rid of the bondage of old-fashioned dogmas. They are not themselves unsound; but still, if a brother should happen to be so, they will defend him, thereby providing a defence for themselves when they should more fully need it. If they would only state what they do believe, or what they do not believe, it would be easy to deal with these foes; but inasmuch as the whole thing is too shadowy, and too vague, we feel as if we were under the plague of flies which were in Egypt when we have to deal with these minute adversaries.

But let us reflect that, notwithstanding all this, God is still building up his Church. Looking back over the last ten or twenty years, am I too sanguine if I say that the age is, after all, better

than it was? I do not mean that the world is better, but I do mean that, as a whole, there is more evangelical preaching and more earnest pleading with God now than there were ten years ago. I am not given to complimenting, but I do feel that we have made an advance, and that the Christian Church is more awake than it was. I grant you that the foes are more vociferous. So let them be. I suppose, the nearer the moon gets to its full, the more the dogs bark; and the nearer the harvest is to getting ripe, the more numerous is the horde of birds that come to feed upon the grain. This must be expected; but God appears in his glory the more his enemies surround his Church.

Putting all these things together,—poor instruments, poor materials, and numerous foes,—let us say that when God builds up Zion under such circumstances as these, he does appear in his glory.

What a splendid thing was that—may we see it repeated in our own day!—when the twelve apostles first attacked Roman idolatry! The prestige of ages made the idolatry of Rome venerable; it had an imperial Cæsar and all his legions at its back, and every favourable auspice to defend it. Yet those twelve men, with no patronage but the patronage of the King of kings, with no learning except that which they had learned at the feet of Jesus, with weapons as simple as David's sling and stone, went forth to the fight; and you know how the grisly head of the monstrous idolatry was, by-and-by, in the hands of the Christian champion as he returned rejoicing from the fray. So shall it be yet again, and then, amidst the acclamation of myriads of witnesses, shall God appear in his glory.

III. With great brevity, let us now observe THE HOPE EXCITED.

If God be glorified by the building up of Zion, then most certainly Zion will be built. If he is glorified by the conversion of sinners, and by the banding together of converted men and women, then it seems but natural to hope, yea, with certainty we may conclude that the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it.

Let me suppose that you had been created as a solitary creature, and that it had been made known to you, by the mouth of God himself, that it would be to God's glory to create unnumbered worlds, would you be unreasonable in looking for the first day in which the heavens and the earth should be created? You would soon come to an absolute certainty, putting faith in the prophecy, that since God would be glorified in creating, he would create; and supposing, when you saw the world created, you knew, from God's own mouth, that it would be to his glory for him to take the reins of human affairs, and manage everything according to the counsel of his own will, you would feel persuaded that he would do it. Well, you are clearly informed here that it is for God's glory to build up his Church; then draw the inference, draw it boldly, nay, draw it confidently, and say, "If it be for God's glory, then it must and shall be done."

I like the spirit in which Luther used to say that, when he could get God into his quarrels, he felt safe. When it was Luther alone, he did not know which way it would go; but when he felt that his

God would be compromised and dishonoured if such a thing were not done, and would be glorified if it were done, then he felt safe enough. So, dear friends, in the great crusade of truth, is not God with us beyond a doubt? The ship of the Church carries Christ and all his fortunes, so how can she be wrecked? The honour of the Church is intertwined with the honour and glory of Christ; if she shall pass away, if she be deserted, then where is her Captain, her Head, her Husband? But as his honour must be safe, so shall hers be. Zion shall be lifted up, that God may appear in his glory.

IV. Our whole subject SUGGESTS AN ENQUIRY.

Have I any part or lot in this work which is to bring glory to God? I may have to do with it in two ways, as a builded one, and as a builder. I can have nothing to do with it in the latter capacity unless I have first had to do with it in the former. God will be glorified in the building up of Zion; *shall I minister to his glory by being part of the Zion that is to be built up?* I remember to have heard one who half-solaced himself in the prospect of his eternal ruin. He was a hardened sinner, but he was trying to draw some sort of comfort from the thought that, if he were lost for ever, he should glorify Christ. I was startled, horror seized me when he put it in that light. A truth in some sense, I could not bear to see it so handled by him as to clothe it in the vestments of a lie. I was obliged to quote the other text, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." You do not find God ever speaking of deriving glory from the death of him that dieth; you do not find that it administers anything of gratification to the Eternal Mind that a soul should perish. There is a glory to his justice, doubtless,—an awful splendour wrapped about the executioner's axe; but it is a glory of which God says but little, and of which my text says nothing at all. The true glory of God is like the glory of the king who will not glory in the numbers executed upon the hill of death, but who glories in his subjects who are happy and blessed. God glories, not in the soul whom there is a dire necessity to cast away, but in the soul whom almighty grace has chosen, redeemed, and saved.

I should think, friend, if thy reason be in a right state, that thou wilt have some wish to glorify the God that made thee. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" dost thou not know? Wilt not thou consider? If thou buildest a house, thou expectest some comfort from it; if thou sowest a field, thou expectest to gather some grain therefrom; and shall God, who has made thee, who has put breath into thy nostrils, and who feeds thee every day,—shall he then have no honour out of thee, no glory at thy hands? Shalt thou be a waif and a stray drifting along on the tides of time valueless, with none to care for thee because thou hast lost thy compass, and livest not for the true object of human life? May I ask you to put this question to yourselves?

The enquiry whether you have anything to do or not with glorifying God in the building up of his Church may be very serviceable to you. If you find that you have no interest at all in the matter, may not that thought be blessed of God to make you start?

Oh, that men would start! They sleep when everlasting wrath is impending; oh, that they would feel the shock, and avert the stroke! A startling preacher is needed by a slumbering age. Be startling preachers to yourselves just now. O men and women, there are some of you—it were hopeless to expect it were not so,—in whom God will have no glory from your being built into his Church; for you are like the stones of the valley, which are not built up, but lie there useless, to be broken at last by the hammer, when the Breaker shall come forth to the work of destruction. Wouldst thou glorify God, sinner? Hast thou never heard the question asked of Christ by the Jews, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” And this was Christ’s answer, “This is the work of God, (the chief work of all,) that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” If thou wouldst glorify God, humble thyself, bow the knee, and kiss the Son, and receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, being built upon this foundation, thou shalt glorify God.

The enquiry shapes itself afresh. *Hast thou anything to do with glorifying God in respect of being thyself a builder up of Zion?* It is a shame that these lips should have to say it, but we must speak the sad truth, that there are some who profess to be built, but who are not building; some who say that they are servants, but are not serving; some who profess to be in the vineyard, but are not working; some who say they are soldiers, but are not fighting! My brethren, I count it to be one of the most precious parts of my spiritual heritage that I am permitted to serve Christ; and let me say that, if my Lord Jesus gave me nothing else on earth but the privilege of serving him, I would bless him for it to all eternity. It is no mean honour to be a servant of the King of kings; and there is such pleasure in honouring Christ, and in winning souls, that I can scarcely believe that any of you have ever tasted it if you are not hungering after more of it. Did you ever win a soul to Christ? Did you ever get a grip of the hand of spiritual gratitude? Did you ever see the tear starting from the eye when the convert said, “Bless you! I shall remember you in heaven, for you have brought me to Christ”? Ah, my dear friend, you will not be satisfied merely with this, for this is a kind of food that makes men hungry. Oh, that you had a rich banquet of it, and yet wanted more still!

The Church of Christ shall and must be built. Even if you and I sit still, it will be built. This a glorious truth, though it is often perverted to a mischievous end,—the Church will be built, even without us; but oh, we shall miss the satisfaction of helping in its building! Yes, it will grow; every stone will be put in its place, and the pinnacle will soar to its predestinated elevation; but every stone, from foundation to pinnacle, will seem to say to you, “Thou hadst nothing to do with this! Thou hadst no hand in this!” When Cyrus took one of his guests round his garden, the guest admired it greatly, and said he had much pleasure in it. “Ah!” said Cyrus, “but you have not so much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I planted every tree in it myself.” One reason why Christ has so much pleasure in his Church is because he did so much for it; and one reason why some saints will have a greater fullness

of heaven than others to rejoice in will be because they did more for heaven than others did. By God's grace, they were enabled to bring more souls there; and as they look upon the Church they may, without self-reliance or self-conceit, ascribing it all to grace, remember what they were enabled to do, as instruments in the hands of the Lord, towards its building up. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS CXXIII., CXXIV., AND CXXV.

Psalm cxxiii. Verse 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.*

Our eyes are far too apt to look below, or to look within, or to look around; but it is wisdom on our part to look up. There is always something blessed to see upward, especially when we look up to him who dwells in the highest heavens,—our Father, our Saviour, our Comforter. There is little down here that is worth looking at, but there is everything for our comfort when we look up.

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.**

This is what we are looking for,—the mercy of the Lord our God. It comes from his great heart, through his almighty hand. A wave of his hand is sufficient to drive away all our troubles. When he opens his hand, he supplies the needs of every living thing, so mighty and so bountiful is he. Let us, therefore, keep our eyes upon our Lord's hands "until that he have mercy upon us."

3. *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:*

The longing soul does not wait in utter silence without expressing its desires. I have heard of some who have said that their will was so fully conformed to God's will that they had left off praying to him; but surely that was a Satanic delusion, for the will of Christ was perfectly conformed to that of his Father, yet for that very reason he abounded in prayer. We must be in an evil case if we leave off praying. The psalmist says that he and those who were likeminded with him waited until the Lord had mercy upon them, and then he began a sort of litany, "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us." He uses the same words twice as if to express the greatness of his need, the clearness of his perception of what he needed, the earnestness of his desire, and his expectation that his need would be supplied. In this verse and the previous one, we have the petition, "Have mercy upon us," presented no less than three times, for mercy is the greatest need of the best man who ever lived.

3. *For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.*

That is a sharp cutting thing, most trying to the soul that has to endure it; and many have been greatly depressed in spirit by the contempt that has been poured upon them. But, Lord, thy mercy is a cure for man's want of mercy; thy thoughtfulness of us will take off the edge from man's contempt of us.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.*

It does not seem to be a desirable thing to be at ease, for it was such people who were the scorers of the psalmist and his godly companions. Job also said, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,654, "Wakeful and Watchful Eyes."

in the thought of him that is at ease." In the stagnant air of a life of ease, all kinds of mischiefs breed, and especially that fever of pride which leads ungodly men to have contempt for God's people.

Psalm cxxiv. Verses 1—3. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick,—*

That is, alive,—

3. *When their wrath was kindled against us:*

If it had not been God who had engaged to take care of his people, they would all have perished; but that God must be Jehovah. I wish that our translators had not been carried away by the superstition of the Jews, and that they had used the word "Jehovah" where it is employed in the original, then this verse and the previous one would have read, "If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up alive;" as some beasts, and birds, and fishes swallow their prey, and as some men would do with us if they could, that is, swallow us up alive, making a short and speedy end of us, not waiting to tear us in pieces, but swallowing us whole and alive.

4, 5. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*

The figure is varied. We are first likened to the lamb that is liable to be swallowed by the lion, and next we are compared to one who is in danger of being carried away by a devouring flood, which shows no pity to any, but sweeps everything before it down to destruction.

6. *Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.*

Neither to Satan and his lieges, nor to wicked men, has God delivered us. We are not to be their prey, for God claims us as his own.

7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.**

What a joyous song that is for the escaped soul to sing! Whenever a Christian man has fallen into difficulties through not walking uprightly, when he has gone astray from the right path, and has been caught in the fowler's net, and is in such trouble that he does not know what to do,—when God comes, and cuts the net, perhaps with the sharp knife of affliction, and the imprisoned soul again finds freedom from worldly associations, and happy liberty in the service of God, I do not know a sweeter song than this that he and others of God's rescued birds can sing as they mount up into the clear light of God's countenance, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

8. *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

This is a good lesson for us to learn from the past experience of the Lord's people. God and God alone did deliver his servants in the past, and herein is our confidence for the present and the future;—our help is in the name—the revealed and manifested character—of Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Psalm cxxv. Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.†*

What comfort there is in this verse to all who trust in the Lord! We never expect to see anyone tear up mount Zion by the roots. The Romans

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,696 (double number), "The Bird Escaped from the Snare."

† See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 1,450, "The Immovability of the Believer."

have been there, and ploughed mount Zion as a field, but they could not remove it; it is there still, and the natural features are the same as they were in the days of Abraham and David. Mount Zion "cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." Men have swept away much that was built on it, but mount Zion is there still, nor shall any human power ever be able to remove it; and, glory be to God, neither men nor devils shall ever be able to remove us if we trust in the Lord, for we "shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.**

At Jerusalem, there is first the deep valley round the hill, and then afterwards a range of encircling mountains; but the munitions of stupendous rock are nothing compared with those eternal ramparts which protect the people of God.

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.*

"The rod of the wicked" may fall upon the lot of the righteous, but it shall not "rest" there. The godly may be oppressed for a season, but that season shall not be too long for them to endure. God will not allow his servants to be tried above what they are able to bear, lest their faith should fail, and, in order to escape from their oppressors, they should "put forth their hands unto iniquity."

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.*

The psalmist prays to Jehovah to do good to those whom he has made good, for there are none who are naturally good; and there is a special goodness which he bestows upon those whom he has made good by the effectual working of his good Spirit. When they no longer lean this way or that way, but stand upright in their integrity, then shall they know this special goodness of the Lord.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,—*

Ways of policy, of falsehood, of self-seeking, of presumptuous sin, of backsliding,—

5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity:—*

If they will work iniquity, they shall go with those that work iniquity. Each one shall go to his own company; if we have loved the people of God on earth, and have walked in God's ways here, we may confidently expect to be gathered with his elect above; but if we have turned aside to crooked ways, what can we expect but that, where the workers of iniquity go, there we too shall go? "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, Jehovah shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity:—"

5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.*

What a blessed benediction that is,—peace! It is the one thing that we want above everything else. We are sometimes glad to know more; but we often tire even of knowing, and would rather sit down as children who are satisfied with what they have been told by others who do know. We wish to be very useful in the world;—and, blessed be God, we can never rest unless we are useful; but there are times of weariness when the best blessing for us, the blessing which shall most help to fit us for future service, is perfect peace, that peace of which our Saviour said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Are all of you who are trusting in Christ in the enjoyment of that peace at this moment? If not, you are not living up to your privileges as believers.

* See *The New Park Street Pulpit*, No. 161 (double number), "The Security of the Church."