

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FRUITS OF GRACE.

A Sermon

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"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."—Isaiah xix. 18-25.

This is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it, as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter failures. This promise stands on record to be fulfilled at some future day. In those bright days for which some of us are looking, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea, then shall this word to Egypt be verified; yea, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigour. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the gospel. If the Lord

should tarry another six thousand years, ay, sixty thousand years—and he may—we are still to go on working, and still to go on labouring, looking for his coming, and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because he pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know his glory, and you may depend upon it there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Satan's dominion. It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied." It is most encouraging to find Egypt mentioned. You find it in one of the Psalms, "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and they shall come out of Ethiopia." Now this I believe to be the literal meaning of the passage. You must understand that the prophecy was given to the people of Israel, and it was given to them, as it were, to children that were using types and figures. It speaks in their language. Hence it speaks of altars, and pillars, and oblations, all of which are to be understood now in the spiritual sense. The Church of God has come to her manhood, in which she has done with material altars and material oblations, seeing that she has Christ to be her only altar, her only priest, and prayer and praise to be the spiritual oblation which she shall bring. I understand the prophecy to be, in brief, just this. In the latter day, Egypt will be converted, and Assyria too, and wonders of grace will be performed in that land, and the people of the land shall with delight worship the Most High.

Having said this, I am now going to use the text for another purpose. Here is a *wonderful display of the grace of God* in this promise to Egypt. I see the very heart of God revealed. I see a display of what God will do, not to Egypt only, but to others also, and though we have much to say, we will try to open up, in a few particulars as we can make them, the display of grace which God gives among the sons of men. We begin thus:—

I. THE GRACE OF GOD OFTEN COMES TO THE VERY WORST OF MEN.

It is promised to Egypt. Now Egypt was the nation which was the type of God's enemies. It was over Egypt that he triumphed at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord?" and we regard Egypt as always being typical of the enemies of God—the peculiar and chief enemies. Yet the grace of God is to come to Egypt. And so will it come often to the worst enemies that God has. Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth with rage against the Christ of God, was met and conquered by eternal love, and his heart was renewed, and he was made an apostle. And oftentimes since then, electing love has chosen those that were most furious against Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon them, and turned the lions into lambs, and made them lie down at the feet of the Saviour. Let us have hope for the worst of men, and let the worst of men have hope for themselves under the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Egyptians were a peculiarly debased people as to their idolatry. If you go into the British Museum you will still see the cats, the crocodiles, the scarlet ibis, which they were accus-

tomed to worship. Besides that, it was one of the sarcasms of the Roman poets that the Egyptians worshipped gods which they grew in their own gardens. They had the sacred beetle, the sacred mouse, and I know not what. And yet, degraded as they were by idolatry, the grace of God was to come to them. And men may have gone far into superstition; they may have debased even their own intellect by what they have tried to believe, and forced themselves down into the very deeps of superstition, and yet, for all that, the grace of God can come to them and lift them up. And the Egyptians were degraded politically too, for we read in one passage of the prophets that Egypt shall be the basest of all nations; and yet, though the basest of nations in that respect, the grace of God shall come to them. Oh! how wondrous is the sovereignty of God! The devil cannot dye a soul so scarlet in sin but what the blood of Christ can make it white as snow. Satan cannot drive a chosen sheep of Christ so far on the mountains of vanity, or into the deserts of sin, but what the great Shepherd of the sheep can find that sheep, and bring it back again. There is hope for the most sunken. There is hope for those that grovel, and that sink in the mire. The infinite compassion of God can reach them, and the eternal power of God can lift them up.

But there is one singular note in the text, that one of the cities in that land of Egypt (if I read the text aright) that was to be saved was called the City of Destruction. It had come to be named by that name, and yet, think of that, God looked upon it with mercy. Now there are in villages, and there are in towns, and certainly there are in London, men that have become so notorious for every sort of vice and sin that they are only known as the devil's own servants; and if anybody in the place were to speak of them, it would be with no question about the horrible condition of their minds and the state of their character. And yet in how many cases has the Lord been pleased to make such beings new men in Christ Jesus! I have some in my mind's eye now, who have been to me a source of unutterable joy, whose characters were known, and certainly not admired. They were the dread of all with whom they dwelt. I remember one whose fist had many a time laid low his adversary, and whose oaths, and cursings, and songs at midnight had often made the village tremble when he was filled with drink. But what a humble child he became when at last the gospel brought him down! How changed and how quiet was his manner when Jesus Christ had renewed his soul—something like John Bunyan with his drink and his Sabbath breakings—but what a saint was he when bowed at his Saviour's feet, he found his sins forgiven! We must not say, "Our children are hopeful, and God will save them, but we cannot expect him to look upon the fallen and degraded." Ah! it is Pharisaism that would make us speak so. The gospel has found some of its brightest jewels in the lowest haunts of vice. Bear it, bear it into the caves of darkness, where the blackness seems to be palpable, and to hang like the glooms of death—bear ye aloft the

everlasting torch, which the divine Lord himself has kindled, and you shall discover by its light some precious blood-redeemed ones, who shall be to the praise of the glory of his grace. "One shall be called the City of Destruction, but thus saith the Lord, I have delivered it, I will save it, for my name's sake."

Now this ought to be very encouraging to every hearer present, for where there is mercy proclaimed to the chief of sinners, there is encouragement to every form of sinner to come humbly to the heavenly Father, and plead the precious blood of Jesus, and obtain life and peace. God grant we may be led there for his name's sake! But now the second observation is that grace is displayed in our text from the fact that:—

II. GOD'S GRACE SENDS A SAVIOUR.

Note, too, that he adds this word, "A GREAT ONE, and he shall deliver them." Beloved friends, you know, all of you, what I have to say, but yet, though you know it, I know no story ever makes more glad your spirit than the old, old story of the Saviour. He that has come to save us is Jesus, the Son of God; to save us from every stain of sin; to save us from our propensity to sin, from the power of our habits, and from the snares of Satan. He has come to save us from the death eternal, to save us from the wrath to come. God has sent us a Saviour. We could not have saved ourselves, but one has come who can. The text says that Saviour is a great one. Oh! I wanted a great Saviour. A little Saviour would not have answered my turn, for great sin wanted a great atonement, and my hard heart wanted great grace to soften it down. Now he that came to save us was God himself—Jesus—nothing less than God—counting it not robbery to be equal with God. He is great in his nature, for as God he is infinite—omnipotent. He is great also in what he has done. Look to him on the cross; it is the Son of God pouring out his life for sinners that they may live through his death. There must be great merit in such a sacrifice. I never dare believe in any limited merit in Christ. He who gave himself there upon the cross, being very God of very God, though certainly man—there can be no limit set to the value of the atonement which he made. Oh! beloved, it is a great Saviour that God gives. And now that he has risen from the dead, he stands before God to plead for us, and it is no little plea—no plea which might be put back or put off. With authority he pleads before his Father's throne, points to his own wounds, and the Father's heart always yields to the Son's intercession. You have a great Saviour, for he is a great pleader. And, besides that, all power is in his hands; the keys of death and hell are at his girdle, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God. Oh! what a Saviour we have! Dare we doubt him? When we cast ourselves upon him, is there not an end to all our fears, for Jesus is mighty to save,

And what a word that is in the text—"a Saviour and a great one, and he shall deliver them"! God did not send Christ at a haphazard.

Jesus did not come here to save those who might perchance be saved—to make men salvable, but he will save all he came to save. Those on whom he fixed his eye of everlasting love, for whom the precious drops were shed—these he will, by the power of his arm, pluck from the jaws of the lion, because with the blood of his heart he has redeemed them. “He shall deliver them.” Oh! you that trust in Jesus, lay this word home. May the Spirit of God lay it home to you. He shall deliver them from all temptation, from all trial, from all affliction, from death itself. “He shall deliver them.”

Now put the two points together. We have mentioned that the grace of God comes to the greatest of sinners, and it brings to them a Saviour, and a great one, and I have laid open to you something of the heart of God in the greatness of his compassion. But we must pass on. Where the grace of God comes, it seems from the text that:—

III. IT CHANGES MEN'S LANGUAGE.

Turn to the 18th verse. “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan”—the spiritual meaning of which is that the grace of God shall make men speak that holy and pure language which is the mark of a child of God. O dear hearer, if the grace of God ever meets with you, your friends will know it—every one—by your conversation. That man could not speak without an oath; there will be no oath now. When he did speak, it was in a proud, boastful, hectoring way about himself. Ah! you will hardly know him to be the same man, for he will speak so humbly and so gently, and when he comes to speak about himself he will have the tears in his eyes to think of what he used to be, and what the grace of God has done for him now. Then his language would be lascivious and unclean at times, but now he desires not even to hear of such things, much less to mention them; for it is a shame for a Christian to speak of the things which are done by many in secret. The grace of God soon rinses out a man's mouth. His wife knows it; his children know it; his workfolk know it; and though some of them will think him a fool to speak after the way in which he now does—though he does not imitate the language of Christians, and is not a cant, yet there is something about his very brogue and talk that might make men say, “Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee.” Oh! would not it be a mercy if God would change the speech of some in London! Even our boys in the streets sometimes talk in a way that is enough to make your blood chill. Foul words are very common in our streets and elsewhere. O sovereign grace, come and visit these, and they shall speak no longer the language of Babylon and the language of Belial, but they shall speak the language of Canaan, for God shall give them a pure language. When you hear men that once could curse begin to pray, when those who were given to blasphemies begin to praise, and when, instead of hearing the noise of strife in the working-man's house, you hear

the song of praise, then is fulfilled the saying that is written, "In that day shall five cities speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts." But I must pass on. Where the grace of God comes:—

IV. IT SETS MEN ON HOLY SERVICE.

"There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord." When a man is in sin he worships himself, or he serves his pleasure and Satan; but when the grace of God comes, the man begins at once to serve God, and becomes God's servant. I am sure I know houses now that have an altar to God in them—the family altar—where you would not have thought such a thing could ever have been. I know some, too, that will this very day give of their substance to God, who two or three years ago would have scorned the act. They would have said it was a waste of money altogether to give anything to the cause of the Most High. There are some teaching at the Sabbath schools, and spending the day of rest in, perhaps, the hardest toil of the week, and doing it very cheerfully too, who once would have laughed to scorn any proposal that they should have done any such thing. But the Lord, when he gets men's hearts, and washes away their sins, takes them into his service, and makes those who were most ready to serve Satan become most willing to serve him. Is not this true—I appeal to many here present—is it not your delight now to do all you can for the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, however, while you say "Yes," you also add, "But I do not do half as much as I should, nor as I ought." You feel precisely as I also felt—and I must make the same confession as yourself. But, brothers and sisters, do not let it end in confession. Let us wake up and do more; for the love that saved us, the love that bought us at such a price, ought not to be recompensed so poorly as it has been. And let us pray for the grace of God, that we may ever have an altar in our own hearts, and be ourselves the sacrifice—that our whole life may be a life of consecration to the living God. Oh! that our common dress might be as priestly vestments, and our ordinary meals as sacraments, and ourselves as priests unto the living God; our whole life a psalm, and our whole being a hallelujah to the Most High! Where the grace of God comes with power, it makes the worst of men become the best, and the lowest of the low become true servants of the living God. "Can it be?" says one; "can I ever be a servant of God?" Ah! yes; hark to the song of heaven! "We have washed our robes"—then they needed washing—"and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Glory be to him who hath made us kings and priests unto our God."

The next display of divine grace in the text is to be seen in this, that where the grace of God comes:—

V. IT TEACHES MEN TO PRAY.

We read in the 20th verse, "They shall cry unto the Lord because

of the oppressors." This is a kind of prayer that only God can teach us. You can easily learn to say a form of prayer, or to read one from a book, but a prayer that can fairly be called a cry is the fruit of grace. The cry is the natural expression of distress. There is no hypocrisy in a cry. When one is sore sick and ready to die, and cries out in anguish, it is the genuine expression of an oppressed spirit. And God always teaches his children to pray such prayers as those. And oh! how sweetly will saved souls pray! Next to the songs of angels, I think the prayers of new converts are among the sweetest things that ever reach our ears. When we have been a long time professors, we are very apt to get into a sort of stilted mode of talking to God in prayer, and men that have more gifts than graces will spend the time in words, words, words. But oh! how has my heart leaped when I have heard a cry, such as "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" when some soul, ready to burst with fear of the wrath to come, has cried out, "Jesus, Lord, have mercy upon me!" or when some heart that has just found Jesus has praised and magnified the exceeding mercy that has put away its sin. Christ can teach the blasphemer to pray; he can take the profane into his school, and teach them all to cry, and what all the clergy and ministry in the land could not do, namely, teach a man to pray one sincere prayer, God the Holy Ghost can do to the very offscouring and the scum of the universe, when once he comes to deal with them in the way of grace. Wonders of grace to God belong. He that teaches us to pray will teach us to praise him in heaven. The soul that lisps out its desires sincerely to God shall one day sing with cherubim and seraphim before the eternal throne. But I must hasten on. Where grace comes:—

VI. IT INSTRUCTS MEN.

We learn this from the next verse, "And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day." It is a very serious evil with many hearers that they are altogether ignorant of the things of God; but it is delightful to observe how sweetly the Holy Spirit can teach. I have spoken lately with some whom God has called by his grace during the past few weeks, and I have been surprised that, although they had never been Bible readers, nor received any religious instruction in their youth, when the grace of God showed them their sin, he did it thoroughly, and when he showed them the Saviour, he did it in a wondrous way, so that when they came to read the Bible it was not difficult to them to understand it, nor to lay hold upon it with delight, and some have become well instructed in the things of the kingdom in a very short time indeed. There is no teacher like the Holy Spirit! "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," and when he teaches they are taught indeed. What boots it to a man to know all earthly knowledge if he knows not his God? But where grace comes, the man is no longer a stranger to the Lord; he knows the Father, the Son, the Spirit. He must know the Father, for he has become

a child. He must know the Son, for he is his only confidence. He must know the Spirit, for it is the Spirit that dwelleth in him, and hath renewed him. Oh! that God would be pleased to-night to take some fresh scholars into his school! Don't say, "I am poor and illiterate." What matters that? With the Lord to teach you, you will make an apt scholar. We can only teach your ears; he can teach your hearts. We can only write the copy in a book, but he can write it on the fleshy tablets of your souls. Never despair of being instructed in the things of heaven. The Lord can graciously instruct you, and if he leads you to-night to receive the Saviour—the great one—he will begin the divine teaching which will end in your being complete in Christ, and your entering into his glory. I want you to notice a little more. Where the grace of God comes into a man's heart:—

VII. IT MAKES EVEN TROUBLE A BLESSING TO HIM.

Read the 22nd verse. "The Lord shall smite Egypt"—there is the trouble—"he shall smite"—there is the trouble again—"and heal it"—there is the mercy—"and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them." An ungodly man, when he is in trouble, has nothing whatever to sustain him, and no good comes out of the trouble. But get the heart renewed, and let the man receive the Saviour, and perhaps the greatest mercies he has are those which are blessings in disguise. I read a story the other day—an incident which happened to a City Missionary. He was preaching one night out in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there was a man—an extremely aged man, who had lost his wife, and lived in a garret alone. He had scarcely a rag upon him and was nearly starved, and he was going out to commit suicide, but, moved by curiosity, he listened to the preaching of the gospel, and it saved his soul. It turned out that he had once been worth £100,000, and had been a distinguished merchant, but had lost his all in a foolish speculation, and had come down from the heights of riches to the lowest poverty; and at an extreme age he found Christ. The missionary found him friends who kept him with about enough to keep body and soul together—a humble crust in a very lowly, solitary room—but he used to say that now he had found the Lord; but he might never have found him if he had not lost all his wealth, and he looked upon it as the greatest blessing that had ever occurred to him, that he was brought to such beggary, that he was able and willing to stand in the street to listen to a sermon; for he said that in his riches he had despised the gospel, and had been altogether an atheist and an unbeliever, but now, when brought to the lowest, Christ had found him, and he had more happiness with his cross than he had with his wealth. Oh! get the grace of God in your heart, and then broken limbs will be a blessing. That long depression of trade that brought you so low will appear a very different thing now. Your lot is very lowly now perhaps, and your toils severe, but God's grace will gild

all these dark things in such a way that you shall even learn to glory in tribulation also, and bless the Lord that he did not leave you to be a stranger to him, but made you his child and, therefore, made you feel his rod—for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? Beloved, what a blessing it is to have the grace of God, seeing it turns adverse circumstances into true prosperity, and makes our losses to be our lasting gains! One other reflection, and that is this concerning the grace of God:—

VIII. IT CHANGES THE RELATIONS OF MEN ONE TO ANOTHER.

Read the 23rd verse. "In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Now the Egyptians and the Assyrians were enemies to one another; they were always fighting. There was a bloody feud and war between them century after century; but when the grace of God shall visit them both, there shall be no more fighting; the Egyptian shall go and visit the Assyrian, and the Assyrian shall visit the Egyptian. Have you never met with a case? Two brothers were at enmity, and would not speak to each other. One of them was saved by grace, and he thought, "Oh! if my brother John might be converted!" He wanted to fall into his brother's arms and make it all up, and be friends again. Meanwhile, brother John had heard the gospel somewhere else, and his soul had been saved, and he goes to find out the other brother, and they are reconciled, and the families that had been at a distance are knit together in love. Oh! the gospel soon breaks down barriers. I won't give a penny for your religion if you are at enmity with anybody—if you can say of anyone of your kith and kin, "I will never speak to them again." Mind, in that day when you appear before God, how can you expect mercy? Well, now, genuine grace makes us forgive as we have been forgiven, and it establishes intercommunications between those who had long been enemies to one another. Should there happen to be in this place at this time any that have long been at variance, I believe that there is no way of establishing a lasting love between you like your both loving Jesus Christ. If you cannot meet anywhere else, you are sure to meet if you come to the cross. A common Saviour will bind you together. Bought with the same blood, and filled with the same divine life, you will become members of the same mystical body; you cannot help loving each other. Oh! that God would put an end in the world to all wars between nations, as well as all strifes between individuals. It won't come about by trade, nor yet by politics, nor by anything of man's devising; but if the gospel spreads, if God converts Egypt and converts Assyria, then Egypt will not desire war with Assyria, nor Assyria with Egypt, but they shall be one in Christ Jesus the Lord. Wonders of grace! wonders of grace, that those that hated should love, and enemies

should become friends. We will close with these last words. Where the grace of God comes:—

IX. IT MAKES MEN TO BE BLESSED, AND TO BE A BLESSING.

You will find that affirmed in the last two verses. "They shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, and it shall be said, Blessed be Egypt, my people." The man that was accursed before, and was a curse, becomes blessed, and is a blessing. I will not enlarge upon it, but I will say this to you, the members of the church. It has delighted me to find the many earnest hearts there are here that are trying to do good, some in one way, and some in another. I would in every case, if my encouragement were worth your having, give it you very heartily. But, beloved, if I do not know of it, and if no one knows of it but yourself and God, go on, go on. It is God's work to save souls, and you are workers together with him. Oh! this city wants you—wants ten thousand earnest spirits. The lodging-houses want you; the alleys and the courts want you; the poor want you; the rich want you. If you have anything to say of the remedy which wisdom has prepared for the remedy of sin's disease, the millions want it. They won't come to hear the gospel preached; take it to their houses, carry it to their doors. If they reject a Saviour, let it not be for want of your hunting after them. Push it in their way. Sow beside all waters. In season and out of season teach ye the Word. Ye know not where God may bless you. But never be discouraged because of the badness of the neighbourhood, or the lowness of the character of the people. If Egypt shall be saved, have faith for this Egypt. If Assyria shall be saved, have confidence in God for those who are often worse than heathens, and you shall have your reward in that day when he of the pierced hand shall distribute crowns to those who faithfully serve him. Rewards, not of debt, but of grace, shall be given to the most obscure and unknown of you, who for his sake have sought to teach little children, or to reclaim the adult who had fallen into sin. Take courage—your work of faith and labour of love are not in vain in the Lord, and will do wonders yet to the praise of his grace. And as to you that are not saved, I have been saying great things of encouragement to you. I don't know who may take hold of them, but if there were one here who should reckon himself to be quite out of hope, it is to that man I spoke; and if there is a man here who says, "You don't mean me; you don't know my character," I will suppose it to be the worst character that was ever heard of—I meant you. He is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Seek ye the Lord! Confess your sins to him. Weep out your confession with your head on your Father's bosom, and say, "Forgive me, forgive me for thy Son's sake," and it shall be done unto you. God grant it may be done, even now, for his name's sake! Amen.