

Spurgeon on Micah

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Spurgeon on Micah

Devotionals, Sermon Notes, etc
by C H Spurgeon

Micah 2:10

Morning and Evening

“Arise, and depart.” — Micah 2:10

The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all—“Arise, and go forth from the home in which thou hast dwelt, from the city in which thou hast done thy business, from thy family, from thy friends. Arise, and take thy last journey.” And what know we of the journey? And what know we of the country to which we are bound? A little we have read thereof, and somewhat has been revealed to us by the Spirit; but how little do we know of the realms of the future! We know that there is a black and stormy river called “Death.” God bids us cross it, promising to be with us. And, after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view? No traveller has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father’s house—to our Father’s home, where Jesus is—to that royal “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” This shall be our last removal, to dwell for ever with him we love, in the midst of his people, in the presence of God. Christian, meditate much on heaven, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss.

“Prepare us, Lord, by grace divine,

For thy bright courts on high;

Then bid our spirits rise, and join

The chorus of the sky.”

Micah 2:13

Morning and Evening

“The breaker is come up before them.” — Micah 2:13

Inasmuch as Jesus has gone before us, things remain not as they would have been had he never passed that way. He has conquered every foe that obstructed the way. Cheer up now thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ travelled the road, but he has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? He has nailed it to his cross. Dost thou fear death? He has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? He has barred it against the advent of any of his children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there are rivers, but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we wear that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on, and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten, they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. You shall, it is true, often engage in combat; but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and

your treasure shall be beyond all count.

“Proclaim aloud the Saviour’s fame,

Who bears the Breaker’s wond’rous name;

Sweet name; and it becomes him well,

Who breaks down earth, sin, death, and hell.”

Micah 5:2

January 26

Spurgeon, C. H.

Daily Help

Those “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). The Lord Jesus had goings forth for His people, as their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time. It was “from everlasting” that He signed the compact with His Father that He would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death on the behalf of His people. It was “from everlasting” that He gave Himself up without a murmuring word. His “goings forth” as our surety were “from everlasting.” Pause, my soul, and wonder! You had goings forth in the person of Jesus “from everlasting.”

Micah 5:2

Morning and Evening

“Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” — Micah 5:2

The Lord Jesus had goings forth for his people as their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time. It was “from everlasting” that he signed the compact with his Father, that he would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death, in the behalf of his people; it was “from everlasting” that he gave himself up without a murmuring word. That from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot he might sweat great drops of blood, that he might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, and crushed beneath the pains of death. His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting. Pause, my soul, and wonder! Thou hast goings forth in the person of Jesus “from everlasting.” Not only when thou wast born into the world did Christ love thee, but his delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men. Often did he think of them; from everlasting to everlasting he had set his affection upon them. What! my soul, has he been so long about thy salvation, and will not he accomplish it? Has he from everlasting been going forth to save me, and will he lose me now? What! Has he carried me in his hand, as his precious jewel, and will he now let me slip from between his fingers? Did he choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep were digged, and will he reject me now? Impossible! I am sure he would not have loved me so long if he had not been a changeless Lover. If he could grow weary of me, he would have been tired of me long before now. If he had not loved me with a love as deep as hell, and as strong as death, he would have turned from me long ago. Oh, joy above all joys, to know that I am his everlasting and inalienable inheritance, given to him by his Father or ever the earth was! Everlasting love shall be the pillow for my head this night.

Micah 5:4

Morning and Evening

“He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord.” — Micah 5:4

Christ’s reign in his Church is that of a shepherd-king. He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock; he commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness.

His reign is practical in its character. It is said, “He shall stand and feed.” The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for his people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a sceptre without wielding it in government. No, he stands and feeds. The expression “feed,” in the original, is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize, to do everything expected of a shepherd: to guide, to watch, to preserve, to restore, to tend, as well as to feed.

His reign is continual in its duration. It is said, “He shall stand and feed”; not “He shall feed now and then, and leave his position”; not, “He shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave his Church to barrenness.” His eyes never slumber, and his hands

never rest; his heart never ceases to beat with love, and his shoulders are never weary of carrying his people's burdens.

His reign is effectually powerful in its action; "He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah." Wherever Christ is, there is God; and whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider that he who stands to-day representing the interests of his people is very God of very God, to whom every knee shall bow. Happy are we who belong to such a shepherd, whose humanity communes with us, and whose divinity protects us. Let us worship and bow down before him as the people of his pasture.

Micah 5:7

Faith's Checkbook

At God's Bidding

"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."—Micah 5:7

IF this be true of the literal Israel, much more is it true of the spiritual Israel, the believing people of God. When saints are what they should be, they are an incalculable blessing to those among whom they are scattered.

They are as the dew; for in a quiet, unobtrusive manner they refresh those around them. Silently but effectually they minister to the life, growth, and joy of those who dwell with them. Coming fresh from heaven, glistening like diamonds in the sun, gracious men and women attend to the feeble and insignificant till each blade of grass has its own drop of dew. Little as individuals, they are, when united, all-sufficient for the purposes of love which the Lord fulfills through them. Dewdrops accomplish the refreshing of broad acres. Lord, make us like the dew!

Godly people are as showers which come at God's bidding without man's leave and license. They work for God whether men desire it or not; they no more ask human permission than the rain does. Lord, make us thus boldly prompt and free in thy service, wherever our lot is cast.

Micah 7:7

Faith's Checkbook

"My God will hear me."—Micah 7:7

FRIENDS may be unfaithful, but the Lord will not turn away from the gracious soul; on the contrary, He will hear all its desires. The prophet says, "Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. A man's enemies are the men of his own house." This is a wretched state of affairs; but even in such a case the Best Friend remains true, and we may tell him all our grief.

Our wisdom is to look unto the Lord, and not to quarrel with men or women. If our loving appeals are disregarded by our relatives, let us wait upon the God of our salvation, for He will hear us. He will hear us all the more because of the unkindness and oppression of others, and we shall soon have reason to cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy!"

Because God is the living God, He can hear; because He is a loving God, He will hear; because He is our covenant God, He has bound Himself to hear us. If we can each one speak of Him as "My God," we may with absolute certainty say, "My God will hear me." Come, then, O bleeding heart, and let thy sorrows tell themselves out to the Lord thy God! I will bow the knee in secret and inwardly whisper, "My God will hear me."

Micah 7:8

Faith's Checkbook

Victory in Distress

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me."—Micah 7:8

THIS may express the feeling of a man or woman downtrodden and oppressed. Our enemy may put out our light for a season. There is sure hope for us in the Lord; and if we are trusting in Him and holding fast our integrity, our season of downcasting and darkness will soon be over. The insults of the foe are only for a moment. The Lord will soon turn their laughter into lamentation, and our sighing into singing.

What if the great enemy of souls should for a while triumph over us, as he has triumphed over better men than we are, yet let us take heart, for we shall overcome him before long. We shall rise from our fall, for our God has not fallen, and He will lift us up. We

shall not abide in darkness, although for the moment we sit in it; for our Lord is the fountain of light, and He will soon bring us a joyful day. Let us not despair, or even doubt. One turn of the wheel and the lowest will be at the top. Woe unto those who laugh now, for they shall mourn and weep when their boasting is turned into everlasting contempt. But blessed are all holy mourners, for they shall be divinely comforted.

Micah 7:18

January 26

Spurgeon, C. H.

Daily Help

God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God is love. He is full of grace; He is the plenitude of mercy; He “delighteth in mercy” (Mic. 7:18).

I believe that every flower in a garden which is tended by a wise gardener could tell of some particular care that the gardener takes of it. He does for the dahlia what he does not for the sunflower; something is wanted by the rose that is not required by the lily; and the geranium calls for an attention which is not given to the honeysuckle. Each flower wins from the gardener a special culture.

He loves us better than we love ourselves.

Micah 7:19

Faith's Checkbook

From Anger to Love

“He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”—Micah 7:19

GOD never turns from His love, but He soon turns from His wrath. His love to His chosen is according to His nature; His anger is only according to His office: He loves because He is love; He frowns because it is necessary for our good. He will come back to the place in which His heart rests, namely, His love to His own, and then He will take pity upon our griefs and end them.

What a choice promise is this, “He will subdue our iniquities!” He will conquer them. They cry to enslave us, but the Lord will give us victory over them by His own right hand. Like the Canaanites, they shall be beaten, put under the yoke, and ultimately slain.

As for the guilt of our sins, how gloriously is that removed! “All their sins”—yes, the whole host of them; “thou wilt cast”—only an almighty arm could perform such a wonder; “into the depths of the sea,” where Pharaoh and his chariots went down. Not into the shallows out of which they might be washed up by the tide, but into the “depths” shall our sins be hurled. They are all gone. They sank into the bottom like a stone. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Micah 7: EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

The prophet begins in a sorrowful strain, and there is much that is sad in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.

Verse 1. Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce, and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly, and joy seems to be banished from his heart.

2. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

Those were sad times in which Micah lived; and yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for, if ever one could be useful to one's fellows, surely it would be then. God had need of a voice like that of the prophet Micah in the days when his worship was forsaken, and the true faith had almost died out among men. Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom, and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age.

3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly,

I wish the professed followers of Christ did good with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way, and at every opportunity, just as wicked men “do evil with both hands earnestly.”

3. The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation; the highest people in the land, who ought to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah! those were ill times indeed.

4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

Sin brings sorrow in its train; and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth, and visits it with national punishments. Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity, and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner's perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad, and thinks that, like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone, and he shall never see them again, but they will all come home to him, and he shall be made bitterly to rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous law of the Lord.

5. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that, where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the prophet felt bound to tell them that each confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives.

6. For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

And this is true in a measure still, for, without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lieth in his bosom, if she be not a true child of God.

Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading:-

7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD;-

There was nowhere else for the prophet to look. According to what he tells us, all men had become false; “therefore,” says he, “I will look unto Jehovah;”-

7, 8. I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

And this is all the light that God's people need. Even if it be the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet, if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us. Dr. Watts truly sang,-

“In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.”

9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

Listen to this testimony of the prophet, tried child of God; even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for he will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy. Sit still in humble patience, and “bear the indignation of the Lord,” for, even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been, and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice. Therefore in patience possess your soul, and wait quietly before your God. Be not without hope, expect that he will plead your cause and that he will execute judgment for you; watch for his light, which will

most surely come, and in which you shall behold, not your own righteousness, but his.

10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She should have her turn of suffering for she should be crushed beneath Jehovah's foot as the mire is trodden in the beets.

11, 12. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God, and oppressed his people; he would let loose the oppressors upon them, and they should find foes in every quarter.

13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

That is a wonderful expression, "the fruit of their doings." All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit. Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in hell, and there shall they lie for ever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below.

14. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Sometimes, there are pastures in the very center of woods, and God's people in Micah's day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out by-and-by to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, "as in the days of old;" and so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation, and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies shall have such liberty that everywhere they shall worship and praise the Lord their God.

15-17. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will issue unto him marvellous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their cars shall be dead: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord, and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed.

18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

He never delights in anger, especially in anger against his own people. That is but temporary anger, and is, after all, only another form of love, for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire. May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod rather than suffer us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity, happiness while yet sin is all round about us.

19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter; and what a horrible catalogue of evils it was, yet here we read, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Even those mountainous sins of which the prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots, and cast them into the depths of the sea.

20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

There is our comfort, our God is the covenant-keeping God who will perform every promise that he has made. Even "if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Blessed be his holy name

Micah 1:12: MAROTH; OR THE DISAPPOINTED

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“For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.” — Micah 1:12.

The village of the bitter spring, for that is probably the meaning of this name Maroth, experienced a bitter disappointment. At the time when the Assyrians invaded the land, the inhabitants expected that deliverance would come to them from some quarter or other. From the context, I judge that they placed some sort of reliance upon the Philistines. Possibly, they had some hope, that the king of Egypt would come up to attack Sennacherib. Evidently, they looked for help anywhere except to God; and, consequently, as no good came to them from the men upon whom they had relied, trial and overwhelming distress came to them from the hand of God. He was angry at their trust in men, and their want of trust in himself, and therefore he punished their unbelief by their total overthrow. The Assyrian swept over them, and stopped not till he reached the gate of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah's faith in God made the enemy pause and retreat.

The fact recorded in the text suggests to us, first, sad disappointments: “the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came;” and, secondly, strange appointments: evil came down from the Lord.” When we have considered these two things, we will change the subject, altogether, and speak about expectations which will not end in disappointment.

I. First, then, we are to think of Sad Disappointments: The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came.”

Disappointments are often extremely painful at the time. Even in little things, we do not like to be disappointed; if our expectations are not realized, we feel as if a sharp thorn had pierced our flesh. But in great matters disappointment is much more serious. In the case of the inhabitants of Maroth, it was fatal, they expected to be delivered from the Assyrians, but they were either slain on the spot, or carried away captive to Nineveh. It would be the most terrible disappointment of all if our expectations concerning our souls should not be realized. It would be painful to the last degree to discover, upon our dying bed, that the good we had looked for had not come, — to find that we had built our house upon the sand, and that, when we most needed its shelter, it was swept away. O Lord, disappoint not thy servant's hope! All my expectation is from thee, and thou hast said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” Any other expectation beside this, concerning our eternal interests, will only bring us, pain and misery for ever.

Disappointments in this life, however, although they are at times very painful, are sometimes of such a character that, could we know all the truth, we should not lament them. There are many who have looked forward to a change in their condition in life, or their position in society, and they have been disappointed. For a time, they have been ready to wring their hands in anguish; yet, if they knew what the consequences would have been if their expectations had been realized, they would fall down upon their knees, and devoutly praise the Lord for the disappointment which had been so great a blessing in disguise to them. You, my brother, had expected to be rich by this time, but God knew that, had you been rich, you would have been proud and worldly, and would have ceased to enjoy fellowship with him, so he kept you poor that you might still be rich in faith. You, my friend, had expected to be in robust health at this time; but had you been so, you might not have been walking so humbly before the Lord as you are now doing. You, my oft-bereaved brother, had hoped to see your family spared to grow up, so that you might have had sons and daughters upon whom you could have leaned in your declining days, yet they might have proved a plague and a sorrow to you instead of a comfort and a blessing. Complain not that they were taken from you in their childhood by that kind hand which made them blest for ever, and only deprived you for a while of their companionship, which, might not have been an unmixed blessing to you. Rest assured, O child of God, that whatever happens to thee is as it should be! Believe that, if thou couldst have infinite wisdom, and the helm of thy life's vessel could be entrusted to thy hands, thou wouldst steer it precisely as God steers it; thou wouldst not always guide the ship through smooth water any more than he does. If thou couldst be unerring in judgment, and couldst be thine own guide, thou wouldst choose for thyself the track which God has chosen for thee. It is divine love and infallible wisdom that have ordered all things for thee up to this very moment; so, whatever thy disappointments may have been, comfort thyself with the assurance that they have been amongst thy greatest blessings.

There are some expectations which are certain to be disappointed. When a man expects to prosper through wrong-doing, his expectations will certainly not be realized; at least, not in the long run, however much he may seem to prosper for a while. When a man thinks that happiness can be found in the ways of sin, he will be bitterly disappointed sooner or later. When a man expects that by self-reliance, he will be able to gain all that he needs without trusting to a stronger arm than his own, his expectations will not be realized. When a man is relying upon his fellow-creature, when he thinks that the all-important matter for him is to have some rich patron or powerful friend, and he is under the delusion that he can do without any help from heaven, he is sure to be disappointed; and he who is depending upon his own good works, and trusting to his own unaided resolutions that hold on in the way of holiness,

will be terribly disappointed unless he repents before it is too late. There are some things which only fools will expect, — things which are contrary to the laws of nature, and things which are contrary to the rules of grace. The man who never sows good corn, and yet expects to reap at harvest time, is a fool, and his disappointment will come in the form of thorns and thistles all over his fields. The sluggard, who lies in bed, and lazily says, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep,” may expect in that way to become wealthy, but Solomon long ago said to him, “Thy poverty shall come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” This is true, in spiritual things as well as in temporal. God gives blessing to effort, and diligence, not to idleness and lethargy.’

Besides this, in many cases disappointments are highly probable. Some of our familiar proverbs relate to such cases as these. One says, “Those who wait for dead men’s shoes are pretty sure to go barefoot.” Another is, “If they never drink milk till they get their uncle’s cow, they will be long thirsty for the want of it.” Yet there are persons who waste a great part of their lifetime in vain expectations of what they call “windfalls.” We know that the “windfalls” in the orchard generally fall because they are rotten and are not worth picking up, and other “windfalls” are often no more valuable. There are men who might have prospered if they had not foolishly sat down in the expectation that, somehow or other, a great fortune would hunt them out, and make them independent; such expectations are usually doomed to disappointment. If any of you have fallen into the pernicious habit of reading works of fiction, and so have formed romantic ideas of what is likely to occur to you, the great probability is that your day-dreams will be only dreams, and that your castles in the air will never be inhabited by you. I pray you not to fritter away your time and opportunities in vain expectations while most probably will never be fulfilled. Expect to receive not quite all you earn, nor all you lend, and probably your expectations will not be disappointed, but, as another of our proverbs puts it, if you count your chickens before they are hatched, it is highly probable that your expectations will not be realized.

There are also other expectations that will possibly end in disappointment. Even the most legitimate hopes are not always realized. “There’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip.” When we feel almost sure that a certain plan must succeed, suddenly it turns out to be all a mistake. We think that, as prudent men, we have arranged matters so wisely that they must succeed, yet in the issue we are grievously disappointed. Be not hasty in condemning those who do not succeed in business for at least in some cases failure has come through no fault of theirs. Do not judge harshly all who are in need; no doubt there are all too many instances in which poverty is the result of idleness or drunkenness, but there are other cases in which poverty is blameless and even honorable. Men may toil hard, and do the very best they can, and seek God’s blessing upon their efforts, and yet they may not be permitted to secure a competence. If you, my friend, reckon upon seeing all your schemes succeed, you are very likely to be disappointed. If you, my Christian brother, imagine that, between here and heaven, the way will be laid with smooth turf well rolled, you will certainly be disappointed. If you think that, the sea will always be calm as a lake, and that no storm will ever ruffle it, you will be disappointed. There will be some things that will fulfill your expectations, but there will be others that will not, and in those you will be like that inhabitant of Maroth, who “waited carefully for good, but evil came.”

In every case, disappointments should be borne with the greatest possible patience and equanimity. I am sorry to say that we do not all bear them so, not even all of us who profess to be Christians. Remember that God has never promised that all our expectations shall be fulfilled; it would have been a doubtful blessing if such a thing had been guaranteed to us, and we might easily have expected ourselves into utter misery. Who are you that everything should happen just as you wish? Should the weather be fine simply because you want it to be so when a thousand fields are gasping for rain? Should you have the channels of trade turned in your direction when, if that were the case, scores of others would be beggared? Is everything in this world to be so arranged that you shall be the darling and pet of providence? It cannot be right for such a state of things to prevail; therefore, when we are disappointed, whether it is in little matters or great ones, let us bear the disappointment bravely, and lay the whole case before the Lord in prayer. Let us ask him wherefore he contendeth with us; and if there be any reason for it which we can discover in ourselves, let us endeavor to remove it; or if we can find no cause, let us believe that God acts in wisdom and in love, and let us cheerfully submit to whatever he appoints for us.

We should bear our disappointments with all the greater equanimity if we would always remember that disappointments are often exceedingly instructive. What do they teach us? Well, first, they teach us that our judgement is very fallible. We learn from them that we are not such prophets as we thought we were; we fancied that if we said that such-and-such, a thing was going to happen, it would surely be so; but when the result proved to be just the opposite, we found that our judgment was not as reliable as we thought it was, and therefore our forecast was quite inaccurate. So our disappointments teach us our need of greater wisdom than our own, and also teach us the folly of trusting to our own understanding.

They also teach us the uncertainty of everything that is earthly. What is there here that can be depended upon for a single hour? The life of the most robust may suddenly end, the current of affairs may change more rapidly than the tide. Riches take to themselves wings, and fly away. The greatest wisdom becomes the greatest folly. All is vanity, and vexation of spirit. If our disappointments teach us this lesson, we shall be well repaid for having suffered them.

Let them also teach us to speak correctly, as Christians should. You know how the apostle James writes, “Go to now, ye, that say,

To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow ... For that, ye ought to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." Let our past disappointments warn us to speak with bated breath about to-morrow and the more distant future, and not to say without any qualification what we will do as if all time were at our disposal, and we were the disposers of all events. Even if we do not always use the words, "If the Lord will," "If God pleases," "If we are spared," or similar expressions, let the spirit of them always be in our mind, so that we do not think and speak unconditionally concerning the unknown future.

Let our disappointments also teach us to submit, absolutely and unquestioningly to the Lord's will. We wish to have things in a certain fashion; but God plainly indicated that they are not to be so, therefore let us cheerfully surrender our wish to his will. Surely, O child of God, you would not think of wanting to have your way when once you learn that it is contrary to your heavenly Father's way! If you are right-minded, you will at once give up your wish, and will say, "Not my will, O my Father, but thy will be done!" You will probably do that all the more decidedly if some disappointment has burnt into your soul the truth that God is wiser than you are, and that his will must always prevail above yours. Stand to the surrender at all times, and say to the Lord, "Show me thy way, and let me hear the voice behind me, saying, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.'"

Let me also add that disappointments may be greatly sanctified. They are not so always, for sometimes they irritate and so cause sin; or they create a murmuring spirit against God, and so make us worse than we were before. But sanctified disappointments are part of that rod of the covenant which is so beneficial in the hand of a chastening God. Sometimes, a grievous disappointment has changed the whole current of a person's life. A man was looking forward to what he hoped would be a happy marriage, but his intended bride suddenly died, and then he surrendered his heart to Jesus, who became the Bridegroom of his soul. A soul had expected to inherit a large estate, but by some means the wealth came not into his possession; and when he found himself poor, he sought true riches in Christ. A strong man had hoped to build up a prosperous business, but he was unexpectedly smitten with serious illness, his former prosperity departed from him, and then he fixed his hopes upon the ever-blessed Son of God, and so he attained to bliss which no earthly success could ever have brought him. I remember meeting a man who told me that he could never see spiritually until he had lost his natural eyesight; and there have, doubtless, been many who were never rich until they became poor, and others who were never happy until their earthly happiness was blighted and blasted, and then they sought and found true happiness in Jesus. What a blessed disappointment it is that leads us to a Saviour's love!

Disappointments are also sanctified to believers when they help to wean them from the world. There is a sort of glue about this world that makes it adhere to us, and makes us adhere to it. David found it so when he wrote, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." Earth naturally clings to earth, but I will warrant you that David cared little enough for earth when his handsome son Absalom became a rebel, and when his house, which had been such a comfort to him, became a terror, and when his subjects, who had almost worshipped him, joined in rebelling against him. Then did he plaintively sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away, and be at rest." Yes, disappointments wean us from the world, and make us plume our wings ready to be up and away to that fair country where, hope shall reach its full fruition, and disappointment shall be unknown for ever.

Moreover, brethren, when we meet with disappointments in this life, we prize all the more the faithfulness of our God. When you have had an unkind word from one whom you have loved, how much more closely you have nestled down in the embrace of your everloving Savior! When you have been betrayed by a friend in whom you trusted, what sweet communion you have had with the friend that sticketh closer than a brother! When your gourd above you has withered, and you have lost its welcome shade, however more you have prized the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! It is a good thing for us to have all earthly props knocked away, for then, we value more than ever the faithfulness of the God who, never fails those who put their trust in him. Those who always remain on dry land will never learn by practical experience what the sailors know. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep; "and it is when, like the storm-tossed mariners, our soul is melted because of trouble, that our dear Lord and Master, coming to us upon the crest of the wave, becomes tenfold more precious to us than he had ever been before. If our disappointments would only make us hold with a loose hand all that we have, — house, and lands, and children, and health, and reputation, and everything, so that, if God should take them all away, we should still continue to bless his name, because we never reckoned that they were ours to keep, but were only lent to us during our Lord's good will and pleasure, — if our disappointments only brought us to such a condition as that, they would be indeed most soul-enriching things.

II. Now I must leave that part of the subject, and turn to the second portion, which is Strange Appointments: "the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord."

This expression must not be misunderstood. "Evil came down from the Lord." The word "evil" here means trial, affliction, chastisement, and to a Christian this kind of "evil" is often for his highest good. It does seem singular to a child of God that even that which he thinks to be evil should come down from the Lord. How can it be that God is loving and kind when he deprives one of his children of her husband, or bades away her babe from her bosom. How can it be that God is infinitely wise, yet he sometimes casts his poor weak children into difficulties where they are at their wits end, and know not what to do? How is it that he loves the

righteous, and is gracious to them, yet he puts some of the best of them into the hottest part of the furnace, and makes it burn most furiously like that of Nebuchadnezzar of old? If our ashes and pains came from Satan, if our losses were the result of chance, or if our sufferings arose only from the malevolence of the wicked, they would be comprehensible but it is oftentimes a marvel and a mystery to a Christian why the Lord sends the trials which lays upon him. Be patient, brother; what thou knowest not, now, thou shalt know hereafter; so be content to wait until God reveals the mystery to thee if he pleases to do so, and then it will make thee marvel that thy Lord should have taken such pains in training thee for the service he has for thee yet to render to him. Perhaps I am addressing some child of God who is sorely puzzled as to why certain things have happened to him. But, father, does thy child always understand all that thou doest to him and for him? It was not long ago that thy boy was sent away to school; perhaps he thought thee unkind in treating him so, yet it was real love to him that prompted thee to send him away from thee to be all the better trained for whatever may lie before him in his after life. He does not understand all that is in your mind, and you can never comprehend all that is in the infinite mind of your Father who is in heaven. Be satisfied that whatever God does must be right.

Yet, remember that, in a certain sense, all trials do come from God. There may be secondary agents coming in between, but let us not cavil at them, or quarrel with them. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" but David said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David." He felt that he deserved to be cursed so he looked upon Shimei's insults as being a form of chastisement from God. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick; but if he had more sense, he would try to bite you, and when we are chastened, it is foolish for us to be angry with the rod that God employs, and we dare not be angry with God. There may be sin in the person who causes us to suffer, as there was in the case of Shimei, but we must look beyond him even as David did, and learn what, God's intention is in thus chastening us, and submissively accept whatever God appoints.

There are some trials which come very distinctly from God. Perhaps you have lost one who was very dear to you; let it comfort your heart that it was the Lord who took away your loved one. There is an empty chair in your house, and every time you look at it your eyes fill with tears, yet never forget that it was the Lord who called to himself the one who used to occupy that chair. Or possibly your trouble is that you yourself are gradually fading away by consumption or some other deadly disease. Well, if it is so, that is God's appointment for you in the order of his providence, so do not rebel against what is clearly his will. Or it, may be that your trial is that you have struggled hard to gain an honest livelihood for yourself and your family; but, instead of attaining that end you are constantly getting further and further away from it. If it is so, look upon your trouble as coming from God, and bear patiently what you are unable to alter.

This leads me, to say to every Christian whose trial is distinctly from the Lord, — My brother or sister, this makes it all the easier for you to submit without murmuring to God's will. When such a trial comes, there is nothing for a believer to say but this, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." There may be cases in which submission will best be indicated by silence before the Lord. When Nadah and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord, and there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, it must have been a terrible trial to their father, yet we read, "Aaron held his peace", as if he thought, "Since God has done it, what can I say?" You know the oft-repeated story of the gardener who had a favourite rose, and when it was plucked, he was very angry; but when he was told that the master had taken it, he said no more about the matter. May not the owner of the garden take any flowers in it that he pleases, and may not the Lord take away his beloved ones from us whenever he chooses to do so? We ought not to be vexed with him when he does so, but we ought rather to say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." No, my Lord, I must not and I will not cavil at anything that, thou hast done. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not man strive with his Maker. In our case, it would not only be striving with our Maker; it would be striving with our best Friend, our Father, our All-in-all, and that we must never do. So, if the trial has come distinctly from God, it should be easy to submit to it.

And, further, if it comes distinctly from God, it gives all the more powerful plea in prayer. One may plead thus, "O Lord, this trouble is not of my own making; thou hast sent it to me for thine own wise purposes, wilt thou not bring me, through it?" Another may say, "O Lord; I am very poor, yet this is not because I have been imprudent or extravagant, but because thou hast permitted it, so will thou not help me in my time of need?" A sister pleads, "O Lord, I am in deep distress; my dear husband has been taken away, and I am left with many children, and with very scanty means, but as thou hast put me into this furnace, wilt thou not be with me in it, and keep me from being consumed?" When a soldier is sent on a campaign, he is not expected to bear his own charges; and if the great Captain of salvation has sent thee out to fight for him, he will meet thine expenses. He will also cover thy head in the day of battle, and make thee more than conqueror through his might. Did the Lord ever lay a heavier burden on any man than that man was able to bear unless he also gave him extra strength to enable him to bear it? Rest thou confident, concerning the trial which God sends thee, that he will also send thee deliverance from it, or grace to glorify him in it. If his left hand smites thee, his right hand will support thee. If he frowns upon them to-day, he will smile upon thee to-morrow. If he leads thee into deep waters, he will bring thee up again to the hills where he will gladden thee with the light of his countenance. The deeper thy sorrows, the higher shall be thy joys; as thy tribulations abound, so also shall thy consolations abound by Jesus Christ. The groans of earth shall be surpassed by the songs of heaven, and the woes of time shall be swallowed up in the hallelujahs of eternity. So that, if in any of

these senses evil comes down upon you from the Lord, I pray that he may give you the grace to accept it, and even to rejoice in it.

III. Now we are to close by thinking, of Expectations Which Will Not End In Disappointment.

For instance, I expect, and so do you if you are the Lord's children, that God will keep his promise. It is not always so written, for they make many promises which they never fulfill. There are men, who are so rich and so reliable, that their signature to a cheque is as good as gold to the full value of the cheque; and God's promise is his cheque, which can be cashed at the Bank of Faith in every time of need. We are all too apt to rely upon our fellow-men, even though they have failed us again and again; but we sometimes find it difficult to depend upon our God, although he has never failed anyone who has trusted him. O beloved, what wickedness lurks in that fact! If you believe every promise that God has given, you will be able to endorse the testimony that Joshua gave to the children of Israel just before he died, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

Then, next, expect much from the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If thou hast really believed in him, expect to be justified by him; expect that he will answer every accusation that can be brought against thee either now or at the last great judgment day. Expect also to be preserved and kept by him. Expect that he will go before thee as thy Shepherd, making thee to lie down in green pastures, and leading thee beside the still waters. Expect that he will plead for thee in heaven, and that he will soon come to take thee up to dwell at his right hand forever. You cannot expect too much of Christ, and large as your expectations may be, none of them shall be disappointed.

And, beloved, expect much from the work of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit of God has quickened you from your death in sin, what, is there that he cannot and will not do? Are you in trouble? He can comfort you. Are you depressed? He can cheer you. Are you in the dark? He can enlighten you. Are you at this moment fighting against sin? He can enable, you to gain the victory. I am sure that many of God's children do not expect half as much as they ought from the Holy Spirit. They seem, to imagine that there are some sins that, cannot be driven out, of them, they do not, in the power of the Spirit, put the sword to the throat of all their sins. Yet, this should be the constant aim of every Christian, to drive out the Canaanites, and smite the last Amalakite with the edge of the sword. The Spirit of God is able to subdue the fiercest temper, he is able to impart activity to the most slothful nature, he is able to repress the wildest and most evil desires, he is able, to excite us to those virtues which seem to be directly opposite to our natural temperaments and characters. "All things are possible to him that believeth." If he will but wholly trust to the Holy Spirit, he shall be able to do great exploits in the war that has to be waged within his own heart, and also in the fight against evil which is raging all around him.

If time would permit, I might go on urging you to cherish expectations which are not likely to be disappointed, but I can only summarize them very briefly. Expect to-night that God will bless you as you offer up your evening prayer. Expect that the Lord will be with you to-morrow sustaining you amid all the cares and toils of the day. Expect for all the days of your active life that, as your days, so shall your strength be; and when your declining years come, expect that consolation will be given to you to meet every emergency. In sickness, expect, to receive sustaining grace. In death itself, expect the Lord's very special presence. Expect a glorious resurrection. Expect the triumph that you shall share with, Christ in his millennial glory. Expect, all eternity of bliss with him as he has promised, and rest assured that none of these expectations shall be disappointed.

I fear that there are some here, who have no right to cherish any of these expectations. You have probably had disappointments about many things already. I cannot pity you very much concerning the trivial disappointments of this life; but if you do not seek the Savior where he is found, there is a disappointment in store for you that might well fill all Christian hearts with tenderest pity and compassion. There is a man who has lived a life of selfish pleasure; he has been clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and has fared sumptuously every day; and, on a sudden, the voice of God declares that he must die. What was to his horror when he sees all his treasures melting away, and himself doomed to depart out of this world as naked as when he entered it. Imagine the case of the man who has been what he calls religious, who has attended to all the ceremonies of his church, or who has been orthodox after the fashion of the sect to which he belongs: but who has had no new birth, and, consequently, none of the life of God in His soul, no indwelling Spirit, no vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior. Yet he has expected to be ferried across the bridgeless river by one called Vain-hope; but when the hour of death has come, God has opened his eyes to let him see his real position, and the dread future that is awaiting him. Oh, the terror of that man when his vain and unfounded hopes are disappointed! We have read of some who have offered a great portion of their wealth if they might only be allowed to live another hour, but it was all in vain, for die they must. God save all of you, my dear hearers, from such a doom as that! In order that it may be so, put not your trust in things below; be not like the inhabitants of Maroth, who looked to the Philistines and the Egyptians to help them, and so waited in vain for the good that never came; but turn your eyes unto him who says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," and then your expectations shall not be disappointed. So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Micah 1:12: Sermon Notes

For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem. — Micah 1:12

The village of the bitter spring (for such is probably the meaning of the name Maroth) experienced a bitter disappointment.

The more eager and patient their careful waiting, the more distasteful the draught of evil which they were compelled to drink. Their trust in man proved to be vain, for the Assyrian swept over them, and stopped not till he reached the gate of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah's faith in God made the enemy pause and retreat.

Let us consider, as suggested by the text:

I. SAD DISAPPOINTMENTS. "waited carefully for good: but evil came."

Disappointments come frequently to the sanguine, but they also happen to those who wait — wait carefull, and expect reasonably.

1. Disappointments are often extremely painful at the time.
2. Yet could we know all the truth, we should not lament them.
3. In reference to hopes of several kinds they are certain. As for instance, when we expect more of the creature than it was ever meant to yield us, when we look for happiness in sin, when we expect fixity in earthly things, etc.
4. In many cases disappointments are highly probable. Conceited hopes, groundless expectations, speculations, etc.
5. In all cases they are possible. "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."
6. They should be accepted with manly patience.
7. They may prove highly instructive, teaching us:

Our fallibility of judgment.

The uncertainty of sublunary things.

The need of reserve in speaking of the future (James 4:14).

The duty of submitting all our projects to the divine will.

8. They may be greatly sanctified.

Sometimes they have turned the current of a life.

They are intended to wean us from the world.

They tend to make us prize more the truthfulness of our God, who fulfills the desire of them that fear him.

They bring us precious things which can only come of experience.

They save us from unknown evils which might ruin us.

II. STRANGE APPOINTMENTS.

The text tells us, "evil came down from the Lord."

1. The expression must not be misunderstood. God is not the author of moral evil. It is the evil of sorrow, affliction, calamity that is here meant.
2. It is nevertheless universally true. No evil can happen without divine permission. "I make peace, and create evil" (Isa. 45:7).
3. Some evils are distinctly from the Lord. "This evil is of the Lord" (2 Kings 6:33).

For testing men, and making their true character to be known,

For chastening the good (1 Chron. 21:7).

For punishing the wicked (Gen. 6:5-7; 19:24-25).

4. Hence such evils are to be endured by the godly with humble submission to their heavenly Father's will.
5. Hence our comfort under them: since all evils are under divine control, their power to injure is gone.

6. Hence the antidote for our disappointments lies in the fact that they are God's appointments.

III. EXPECTATIONS WHICH WILL NOT END IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

1. Hopes founded on the promises of God (Heb. 10:23).
2. Confidence placed in the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 2:6).
3. Desires presented in believing prayer (Matt. 21:22).
4. Harvest hopes in connection with sowing seed for the Lord (Ps. 126:5-6).
5. Expectations in falling asleep in Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14). Is your life embittered by disappointment?

Cast the cross into the bitter water, and it will become sweet.

Gatherings

During the period when lotteries were unhappily allowed to flourish in this country, a gentleman, looking into the window of a lottery office in St. Paul's Churchyard, discovered to his joy that his ticket had turned up a £10,000 prize. Intoxicated with this sudden accession of wealth, he walked round the churchyard, to consider calmly how he should dispose of his fortune. On again, in his circuit, passing the lottery office, he resolved to take another glance at the charming announcement in the window, when, to his dismay, he saw that a new number had been substituted. On inquiry, he found that a wrong number had at first been posted by mistake, and that after all he was not the holder of the prize. His chagrin was now as great as his previous pleasure had been. — W. Haig Miller's "Life's Pleasure Garden"

It is wise, when we are disappointed in one thing, to set over against it a hopeful expectancy of another, like the farmer who said, "If the peas don't pay, let us hope the beans will." Yet it would be idle to patch up one rotten expectation with another of like character, for that would only make the rent worse. It is better to turn from the fictions of the sanguine worldling to the facts of the believer in the Word of the Lord. Then, if we find no profit in our trading with earth, we shall fall back upon our heart's treasure in heaven. We may lose our gold, but we can never lose our God. The expectation of the righteous is from the Lord, and nothing that comes from him shall ever fail.

I knew one who had made an idol of his daughter, and when she sickened and died, he was exceedingly rebellious, and the result was that he died himself. Expectations which hang upon the frail tenure of a human life may fill our cup with wormwood if we indulge them. Could this father have owned the Lord's hand in the removal of his child, and had he beforehand moderated his expectations concerning her, he might have lived happily with the rest of his family, and have been an example of holy patience. — C. H. S.

Who has not muttered "Marah" over some well in the desert which he strained himself to reach, and found to be bitterness? Have you found no salt waters where you thought to find sweetness and joy? Love, beauty, the world's bright throngs, marriage, home, the things which once wooed you, and promised to slake the thirst of your soul for happiness, are they all Elims, sweet springs and palms? Oh, what fierce murmurings of "Marah" have I heard from hearts wrung with anguish, from souls withered and blasted by a too fond confidence in anything or any being but God! Believe it, no man, with a man's heart in him, gets far on his wilderness way without some bitter soul-searching disappointment; happy he who is brave enough to push on another stage of the journey, and rest in Elim, where there are twelve springs, living springs of water, and threescore and ten palm trees. — L. B. Brown

Disappointments in favorite wishes are trying, and we are not always wise enough to remember that disappointments in time are often the means of preventing disappointments in eternity. — William Jay

Micah 2:7. THE HOLY GHOST THE NEED OF THE AGE.

NO. 1952

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13TH, 1887,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" — Micah 2:7.

Brethren, what a stern rebuke to the people of Israel is contained in the title with which the prophet addressed them — "O thou that art named the house of Jacob"! It is as much as to say to them — "You wear the name, but you do not bear the character of Jacob." It is the Old Testament version of the New Testament saying, "Thou hast a name to live, and art dead." They gloried that

they were the seed of Israel, they vaunted the peculiar privileges which came to them as the descendants of God's honored and chosen servant Jacob; but they did not act in the same way as Jacob would have acted: they were devoid of Jacob's faith in Jehovah, they knew nothing of Jacob's power of prayer, and nothing of his reliance upon the covenant. The words of Micah imply that the descendants of Jacob in his day were proud of the name of "house of Jacob," but that they were not worthy of it. Nothing is more mischievous than to cling to a name when the thing for which it stands has disappeared. May we never come to such a stage of declension, that even the Spirit of God will be compelled, in speaking to us, to say, "O thou that art called the church of God!" To be named Christians, and not to be Christians, is to be deceivers or deceived. The name brings with it great responsibility, and if it be a name only, it brings with it terrible condemnation. It is a crime against the truth of God if we dare to take the name of his people when we are not his people. It is a robbery of honor from those to whom it is due; it is a practical lie against the Holy Ghost; it is a defamation of the character of the bride of Christ to take the name of Christian when the Spirit of Christ is not among us. This is to honor Christ with our lips and disgrace him by our lives. What is this but to repeat the crime of Judas, and betray the Son of man with a kiss? Brothers and sisters, I say again, may we never come to this! Truths not names; facts, not professions, are to be the first consideration. Better to be true to God, and bear the names of reproach which the adversary is so apt to coin, than to be false to our Lord, and yet to be decorated with the names of saints, and regarded as the most orthodox of believers. Whether named "the house of Jacob" or not, let us be wrestlers like Jacob, and like him may we come off as prevailing princes — the true Israel of God!

When the Lord found his chosen people to be in such a state that they had rather the name than the character of his people, he spoke to them of the spirit of the Lord. Was not this because their restoration must come from that direction? Was not their evil spirit to be removed by the Lord's good Spirit? "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" I believe, brethren, that whenever the church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, he is the very breath of the church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power. If the Spirit be withdrawn, then the vitality of godliness begins to decline, and the energy thereof is near to dying out. If we ourselves feel that we are backsliding, let us turn to the Spirit of God, crying, "Quicken thou me in thy way." If we sorrowfully perceive that any church is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us direct the attention of our fellow Christians under declension to the Spirit of God. They are not straitened in him, but in themselves; let them turn to him for enlargement. It is he alone who can quicken us and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. I admire the wisdom of God here, that when speaking by the prophet he rebukes the backsliding of the people, he immediately directs their minds to the Holy Spirit who can bring them back from their wanderings, and cause them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. Let us learn from this divine wisdom, and in lowly reverence and earnest faith let us look to the Spirit of the Lord.

In speaking to Israel upon the Spirit of God, the prophet Micah uses the remarkable language in our text, upon which I would now speak to you. "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" May the Holy Ghost help me to speak, and you to hear!

I. And, first, I think we may consider these words to have been spoken To Denounce Those Who Would Control The Spirit Of God. "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Can you hold him a captive, and make him speak at your dictation?

On turning to the connection you will find that there were certain prophets sent of God to Israel who were unpopular. The message which they brought was not acceptable: the people could not endure it, and so we read in the sixth verse; "Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame." The words of these prophets came so home to their consciences and made them so ashamed of themselves, that they said, "Do not prophesy: we wish not to hear you." To these Micah replies, "Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened by you?"

There were some in those days who would altogether have silenced the Spirit. They would banish all spiritual teaching from the earth, that the voice of human wisdom might be uncontradicted. But can they silence the Spirit of God? Has he not continually spoken according to his own will, and will he not continue to do so? Is he not the free Spirit who, like the wind, bloweth where he listeth? If the adversaries could have slain with the sword all the messengers of God, would he not have found others? and if these also had been killed, could he not out of stones have raised up heralds of his truth? While the Scriptures remain, the Holy Spirit will never be without a voice, to the sons of men; and while he remains, those Scriptures will not be left without honest hearts and tongues to expound and enforce them. Is it possible for men anywhere to silence the Spirit of God? they may be guilty of the crime because they desire to commit it, and attempt to do so; but yet its accomplishment is beyond their reach. They may "quench the Spirit" in this and that man; but not in those in whom he effectually worketh. The Almighty Spirit may be resisted, but he will not be defeated. As well might men attempt to stop the shining of the sun, or seal up the winds, or still the pulsing of the tides, as effectually to straiten the Spirit of the Lord.

"When God makes bare his arm, What can his work withstand?"

Jehovah speaks, and it is done; who shall resist his word? When his Spirit attends that word, shall it fall to the ground? "My word,"

saith he, "shall not return unto me void"; and all the sinners on earth and all the devils in hell cannot alter that grand decree. Every now and then there seems to be a lull in the history of holy work, a silence as of God, as if he were wearying of men, and would speak no longer to them. But ere long, in some unexpected quarter, the voice of the Lord is heard once more; some earnest spirit breaks the awful silence of spiritual death, and again the adversary is defeated. Outbursts of the great spirit of life, and light, and truth come at the divine will, when men least look for them or desire them. When Jesus has been crucified, even then the Holy Ghost descends, and the victories of the cross begin. No, my brethren, the Spirit of the Lord is not silenced: the voice of the Lord is heard above the tumults of the people.

The apostate Israelites also tried to straiten the Spirit of God by only allowing certain persons to speak in his name. They would have a choice of their prophets, and a bad choice too. See in the eleventh verse: "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people." They had a liking for preachers who would indulge their lusts, pander to their passions, and swell their pride with windy flatteries. This age also inclines greatly to those who have cast off the restraints of God's revelation, and utter the flattering inventions of their own boasted "thought." Your liberal spirits, your large-hearted men, your despisers of the old and hunters after the new — these are the idols of many. As for those who would urge upon men separation from the world and holiness to the Lord, they are Puritanic, and out of date. In Micah's days Israel would only hear false prophets; the rest they would not listen to. "What!" says Micah, "is the spirit of the Lord then to be shut up to speak to you by such men as you would choose? Is he not to speak by whomsoever he pleases?"

It is the tendency of churches in all ages to fetter the free Spirit. Now they are afraid that we shall have too many preachers, and they would restrain their number by a sort of trades-unionism. In certain churches none must speak in God's name unless they have gone through a certain humanly-prescribed preparation, and have been ordained after a regulation manner: the Spirit of God may speak by the ordained, but he must not speak by others. In my inmost soul I treasure the liberty of prophesying. Not the right of every man to speak in the name of the Spirit, but the right of the Spirit to speak by whomsoever he pleases. He will rest on some rather than on others, and God forbid that we should straiten his sovereignty! Lord, send by whomsoever thou wilt send; choose whom thou wilt to the sacred office of ministers of God. Amongst the poor and illiterate the Spirit of God has had voices as clear and bold as among the educated and refined, and he will have them still; for he is not straitened, and it is the way of him to use instruments which pour contempt upon all the vain-glory of men. He anoints his own to bear witness for his truth by life and lip; these the professing church may criticize, and even reject, saying, "The Lord has not spoken by these;" but the word of the Lord will stand, notwithstanding the judgment of men. God's true ministers shall be owned of him: wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord's Spirit will not be straitened or shut up by all the rules, and modes, and methods which even good men may devise. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the power of the Spirit waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men.

Further, this people tried to straiten the Spirit of God by changing his testimony. They did not wish the prophets to speak upon subjects which caused shame to them. They bade them prophesy smooth things. Tell us that we may sin with safety; tell us that the punishment of sin is not so overwhelming as we have feared. Stand up and be advocates for the devil by flattering us with "a larger hope." Hint to us that, after all, man is a poor, inoffensive creature, who does wrong because he cannot help it, and that God will wink at his sins; and if he does punish him for a while, will soon set it all right. That was the style of teaching which Israel desired, and no doubt they found prophets to speak in that manner, for the demand soon creates the supply. But Micah boldly asks, "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Do you think that he will have his utterances toned down, and his revelation shaped to suit your tastes?

Brethren, let me ask you, do you imagine that the gospel is a nose of wax which can be shaped to suit the face of each succeeding age? Is the revelation once given by the Spirit of God to be interpreted according to the fashion of the period? Is "advanced thought" to be the cord with which the spirit of the Lord is to be straitened? Is the old truth that saved men hundreds of years ago to be banished because something fresh has been hatched in the nests of the wise? Think ye that the witness of the Holy Ghost can be shaped and moulded at our will? Is the divine Spirit to be rather the pupil than the teacher of the ages? "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" My very soul boils within me when I think of the impudent arrogance of certain wilful spirits from whom all reverence for revelation has departed. They would teach Jehovah wisdom; they criticize his word and amend his truth. Certain Scriptural doctrines are, forsooth, discarded as dogmas of the medieval period; others are denounced as gloomy because they cannot be called untrue. Paul is questioned and quibbled out of court, and the Lord Jesus is first belauded and then explained away. We are told that the teaching of God's ministers must be conformed to the spirit of the age. We shall have nothing to do with such treason to truth. "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Shall his ministers speak as if he were? Verily, that same treasure of truth which the Lord has committed unto us we will keep inviolate so long as we live, God helping us. We are not so unmindful of the words of the apostle, "Hold fast the form of sound words," as to change a syllable of what we believe to be the word of the Lord.

Certain of these backsliding Israelites went so far as to oppose the testimony of God. Note in the eighth verse — "Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy." It is sad when God's own people become the enemies of God's own Spirit; yet those who professed to be of the house of Jacob, instead of listening to the voice of the living God, began to sit in judgment upon his word, and even to contradict the same. The worst foes of the truth are not infidels, but false professors. These men called themselves

God's people, and yet fought against his Spirit. "What then," saith Micah, "is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Will the Spirit of God fail? Will his operations on the hearts of men come to nothing? Will the truth of God be put to shame, and have no influence over human minds? Shall the gospel be driven out of the world? Will there be none to believe it? none to proclaim it? none to live for it? none to die for it? We ask, with scorn, "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Brethren, my confidence in the success of the old faith is not lessened because so many forsake it. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." If all the confessors of the faith could be martyred, even from their ashes, like a heavenly phoenix, the truth would rise again. The Spirit of the Lord lives, and therefore the truth of God must live also. Is not all truth immortal? How much more that which is the shrine of God! The Spirit's witness concerning the sin of man, the grace of God, the mission of Jesus, the power of his blood, the glory of his resurrection, reign, and advent — this witness, I say, cannot cease or fail. It is to be greatly lamented that so many have turned aside unto vanities, and are now the enemies of the cross; but fear ye not, for the victory is in sure hands. O ye that would control the Spirit of God, remember who he is, and bite your lips in despair; what can ye do against him? Go bit the tempest, and bridle the north wind, and then dream that the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened by you! He will speak when he pleases, by whom he pleases, and as he pleases, and his word shall be with power. None can stay his hand, nor say unto him, "What doest thou?" Thus much upon the first use of our text.

II. The second use of it is this, To Silence Those Who Would Censure The Spirit. Some even dare to bring accusations against the Holy Spirit of God. Read the text again: "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings?" If aught be amiss, is he to be blamed for it?

The low estate of the Church, is that to be laid at God's door? It is true that the Church is not so full of life and energy and power and spirituality and holiness as she was in her first days, and therefore some insinuate that the gospel is an antique and an effete thing: in other words, that the Spirit of God is not so mighty as in past ages. To which the answer is, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings?" If we are lukewarm, is that the fault of the Spirit of fire? If we are feeble in our testimony, is that the fault of the Spirit of power? If we are weak in prayer, is that the fault of the Spirit who helpeth our infirmities? Are these his doings? Instead of blaming the Holy Ghost, would it not be better for us to smite upon our breasts and chasten our hearts? What if the church is not "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," as once she was; is not this because the gospel has not been fully and faithfully preached, and because those who believe it have not lived up to it with the earnestness and holiness which they ought to have exhibited? Is not that the reason? In any case, are these his doings? Can you lay the blame of defection and backsliding, of want of strength, of want of faith, at the door of the Holy Ghost? God forbid! we cannot blame the Holy One of Israel.

Then it is said, "Look at the condition of the world. After the gospel has been in it nearly two thousand years, see how small a part of it is enlightened, how many cling to their idols, how much of vice, and error, and poverty, and misery, are to be found in the world!" We know all these sad facts; but are these his doings? Tell me, when has the Holy Spirit created darkness or sin? Where has he been the author of vice or oppression? Whence come wars and fightings? Come they from him? Come they not from our own lusts? What if the world be still an Augean stable, greatly needing cleansing; has the Spirit of God in any degree or sense rendered it so? Where the gospel has been fully preached, have not the words of the Lord done good to them that walk uprightly? Have not cannibals, even during the last few years, been reclaimed and civilized? Has not the slave trade, and other villanies, been ended by the power of Christian influence? How, then, can the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of the gospel, be blamed? Will you attribute the darkness to the sun? Will you charge the filthiness of swine to the account of the crystal stream? Will you charge the pest upon the fresh breeze from the sea? It were quite as just, and quite as sensible. No, we admit the darkness and the sin and the misery of men. Oh, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night concerning these things! But these are not the work of the Spirit of God. These come of the spirit from beneath. He that is from above would heal them. He is not straitened. These are not his doings. Where his gospel has been preached, and men have believed it and lived according to it, they have been enlightened, and sanctified, and blessed. Life and love, light and liberty, and all other good things, come of the Spirit of the Lord.

"Blessings abound where'er he reigns; The prisoner leaps to lose his chains, The weary find eternal rest, And all the sons of want are bless'd."

But some have said, "Yes, but then see how few the conversions are nowadays! We have many places of worship badly attended, we have others where there are scarcely any conversions from the beginning of the year to the end of it." This is all granted, and granted with great regret; but "is the spirit of the Lord straitened: are these his doings?" Cannot we find some other reason far more near the truth? O sirs, if there are no conversions we cannot fall back upon the Spirit of God, and blame him. Has Christ been preached? Has faith been exercised? The Preacher must take his share of blame; the church with which he is connected must also inquire whether there has been that measure of prayer for a blessing on the word that there ought to have been. Christians must begin to look into their own hearts to find the reason for defeat. If the work of God be hindered in our midst, may there not be some

secret sin with us which hinders the operation of the Spirit of God? May he not be compelled by the very holiness of his character to refuse to work with an unholy or an unbelieving people? Have ye never read, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? May not unbelief be turning a fruitful land into barrenness? The Spirit himself is not straitened in his power; but our sin has made him hide himself from us. The want of conversions is not his doing: we have not gone forth in his strength. We shake off with detestation the least trace of a thought that should lay any blame to the Spirit of the Most High. Unto us be shame and confusion of face as at this day.

But it is also said that there is a want of power largely manifested by individual saints. Where are now the men who can go up to the top of Carmel and cover the heavens with clouds? Where are the apostolic men who convert nations? Where are the heroes and martyr spirits of the better days? Have we not fallen upon an age of little men, who little dare and little do? It may be so; but this is no fault of the great Spirit. Our degeneracy is not his doing. We have destroyed ourselves, and only in him is our help found. Instead of crying to-day, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord," we ought to listen to the cry from heaven which saith, "Awake, awake, O Zion; Shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments." Many of us might have done great exploits if we had but given our hearts thereto. The weakest of us might have rivalled David, and the strongest among us might have been as angels of God. We are straitened in ourselves; we have not reached out to the possibilities of strength which lie within grasp. Let us not wickedly insinuate a charge against the good Spirit of our God; but let us in truthful humility blame ourselves. If we have not lived in the light, can we marvel that we are in great part dark? If we have not fed upon the bread of heaven, can we wonder that we are faint? Let us return unto the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Ghost and into fire, and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before us an open door, and if we enter not, we are ourselves to blame. He giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and if we be still impoverished, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. Thus much, then, have I spoken, using the text to silence those who would censure the Spirit of God.

III. In the third place, our subject enters a more pleasing phase, while I use it To Encourage Those Who Trust In The Spirit Of The Lord. My brethren, let us this morning with joy remember that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.

Let this meet our trouble about our own straitness. What narrow and shallow vessels we are! How soon we are empty! We wake up on the Sabbath morning and wonder where we shall find strength for the day. Do you not sigh, "Alas! I cannot take my Sunday-school class to-day with any hope of teaching with power; I am so dreadfully dull and heavy; I feel stupid and devoid of thought and feeling"? In such a case say to yourself, "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" He will help you. You purpose to speak to some one about his soul, and you fear that the right words will not come. You forget that he has promised to give you what you shall speak. "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Cannot he prepare your heart and tongue? As a minister of Christ I have constantly to feel my own straitness. Perhaps more than any other man I am faced by my own inefficiency and inability to address such an audience so often, and to print all that is spoken. Who is sufficient for these things? I do not feel half as capable of addressing you now as I did twenty years ago. I sink as to conscious personal power, though I have a firmer faith than ever in the all-sufficiency of God. No, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. Still is that promise our delight: "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a joy to become weak that we may say with the apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong." Behold, the strength of the Lord is gloriously revealed, revealed to perfection in our weakness. Come, ye feeble workers, ye fainting laborers, come and rejoice in the unstraitened Spirit. Come, you that seem to plough the rock and till the sand, come and lay hold of this fact, that the Spirit of the Lord is omnipotent. No rock will remain unbroken when he wields the hammer, no metal will be unmelted when he is the fire. Still will our Lord put his Spirit within us and gird us with his power, according to his promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

This also meets another matter, namely, the lack of honored leaders. We cry at this time, "where are the eminent teachers of years gone by?" The Lord has made a man more precious than the gold of Ophir. Good and great men were the pillars of the church in former times, but where are they now? Renowned ministers have died, and where are their successors? It is not an unfrequent thing with the older brethren for them to say one to the other, "Do you see the young men springing up who will equal those whom we have lost?" I am not among those who despair for the good old cause; but certainly I would be glad to see the Elishas who are to succeed the Elijahs who have gone up. Oh, for another Calvin or Luther! Oh, for a Knox or a Latimer, a Whitefield or a Wesley! Our fathers told us of Romaine and Newton, Toplady and Rowland Hill: where are the like of these? When we have said "where?" echo has answered "where?" But herein is our hope: the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He can raise up standard-bearers for his hosts. He can give to his church stars in her firmament as bright as any that ever gladdened our fathers' eyes. He that walketh among the golden candlesticks can so trim the lamps that those which are dim shall burn with sevenfold splendor. He who found a Moses to face Pharaoh, and Elijah to face Jezebel, can find a man to confront the adversaries to-day. To equip an army of apostolic men would be a small matter to the Creator of heaven and earth. Let us have no fear about this. He that ascended on high, leading captivity captive, gave such large gifts unto men, that unto the end of the dispensation they will not be exhausted. Still doth he give evangelists, pastors, and teachers, according as the need of the church may be. Let us cast away all fear as to a break in the succession of witnesses; for the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and it shall never lack a man to declare it.

Brethren, the great truth now before us may prevent our being dismayed by the peculiar character of the age in which we live. It is full of a terrible unrest. The earthquake in the Riviera is only typical of a far greater disturbance which is going on everywhere. The

foundations of society are quivering; the corner-stones are starting. No man can foretell what the close of this century may see. The age is growing more and more irreverent, unbelieving, indifferent. The men of this generation are even more greedy of gain, more in haste after their ambitions, than those that preceded them. They are fickle, exacting, hungering after excitement and sensation. Here comes in the truth — “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Was not the gospel intended for every age, and for every condition of human society? Will it not meet the case of London and Ireland as well as the case of the old Roman empire, in the midst of which it first began its course? It is even so, O Lord! Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; and we with joyful confidence fall back upon the same delivering power, saying in our hearts, “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened,” he will bear us through.

But, then, sometimes we are troubled because of the hardness of men’s hearts. You that work for the Lord know most about this. If anybody thinks that he can change a heart by his own power, let him try with any one he pleases, and he will soon be at a nonplus. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon: our trembling arm cannot roll away the stone of natural depravity. Well, what then? The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! Did I hear you cry, “Alas! I have tried to reclaim a drunkard, and he has gone back to his degradation”? Yes, he has beaten you, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do you cry, “But he signed the pledge, and yet he broke it”? Very likely your bonds are broken; but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot he renew the heart, and cast out the love of sin? When the Spirit of God works with your persuasions, your convert will keep his pledge. “Alas!” cries another, “I hoped I had rescued a fallen woman, but she has returned to her iniquity.” No unusual thing this with those who exercise themselves in that form of service; but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot he save the woman that was a sinner? Cannot he create a surpassing love to Jesus in her forgiven spirit? We are baffled, but the Spirit is not. “But it is my own boy,” cries a mother. “Alas! I brought him up tenderly from his youth, but he has gone astray. I cannot persuade him to hear the word: I cannot do anything with him.” Dear mother, register that confession of inability, and then by faith write at the bottom of it, “But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Have faith in God, and never let your discovery of your own weakness shake your firm conviction that with God all things are possible. It seems to me to be a fountain of comfort, a storehouse of strength. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor conceive of the Holy Ghost as bounded and checked by the difficulties which crop up in fallen human nature. No case which you bring to him with affectionate tears and with an earnest faith in Jesus shall ever be dismissed as incurable. Despair of no man, since the Lord of hosts is with us.

Ah well! says one, but I am oppressed with the great problem which lies before the Church. London is to be rescued, the world is to be enlightened. Think of India, China, and the vast multitudes of Africa. Is the gospel to be preached to all these? Are the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord? How can these things be! Why, sirs, when I think of London alone, a world of poverty and misery, I see the sheer impossibility of delivering this world from the power of darkness. Do you prefer a theory which holds out no hope of a converted world? I do not wonder! Judge after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and the thing is quite beyond all hope. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely the good Lord means to convince the Church of her own powerlessness, that she may cast herself upon the divine might. Looking around she can see no help for her in her great enterprise: let her look up and watch for his coming who will bring her deliverance. Amid apparent helplessness the Church is rich in secret succours. If the Spirit of God shall anoint our eyes we shall see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of the Lord. Behold, the stars in their courses fight against our adversaries; the earth shall yet help the woman, and the abundance of the seas shall yield their strength unto God. When the time cometh for the Lord to make bare his arm, we shall see greater things than these, and then we shall wrap our faces in a veil of blushing confusion to think that we ever doubted the Most High. Behold, the Son of Man cometh; shall he find faith among us? Shall he find it anywhere on the earth? The Lord help us to feel in our darkest hour that his arm is not shortened!

IV. I must close by remarking that this text may be used To Direct Those Who Are Seeking After Better Things.

I hope that in this audience there are many who are desiring to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ. You are already convinced of sin, but you are by that conviction driven to despondency and almost to despair. Now notice this: whatever grace you need in order to salvation the Holy Spirit can work it in you. You want a more tender sense of sin. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can he not give it to you? You want to be able to perceive the way of salvation; can he not instruct you? You want to be able to take the first step to Christ; you want, in fact, to trust him wholly and alone, and so find peace in him. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can he not give you faith? Do you cry, “I would believe, but I cannot tell how”? The Spirit will help you to believe. He can shed such light into your mind, that faith in Christ shall become an easy and a simple thing with you. The Spirit of God is not straitened: he can bring you out of darkness into his marvellous light. If you are quite driven from all reliance on your own natural power, then cry unto him, “Lord, help me!” The Holy Spirit has come on purpose to work all our works in us. It is his office to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto us. Yield yourself to his gracious direction. Be willing and obedient, and he will lead you into all truth.

Notice again: although you are under deep depression of spirit, and you feel shut up, so that you cannot come forth; yet the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He is not weighed down nor discouraged. His name is the Comforter, and he can comfort to purpose.

What though you be to-day ready to lay violent hands upon yourself by reason of the trouble of your restless thoughts, yet is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Look you to the strong for strength, even to your God. Doth not the Lord cry to you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else"? Your strength as well as your salvation lies in him. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Trust, implicitly trust, for the Spirit of God is not straitened. Your despondency and unbelief are not his doings, they are your own. He has not driven you into this misery. He invites you to come forth of it, and trust the Son of God, and rest in the finished righteousness of Christ, and you shall come at once into light and peace.

May I invite you to remember how many persons have already found joy, peace, and salvation by believing the teaching of the Spirit of God. In the text the question is asked, "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" Many of us can bear testimony to-day that the word of the Lord is not word only, but power. It has done good to us. The gospel has not only been much to us, it has been everything to us. Personally, I do not believe and preach the gospel because I have made a choice, and have preferred it to any other theory of religion out of many others which might have been accepted. No. There is no other truth to me. I believe it because I am a saved man by the power of it. The truth revealed by the Spirit has new-created me. I am born again by this living and incorruptible seed. My only hope of holiness in this life, and of happiness in the life to come, is found in the life and death, the person and merit, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Give up the gospel! I may when it gives me up; but not while it grasps my very soul. I am not perplexed with doubt, because the truth which I believe has wrought a miracle on me. By its means I have received and still retain a new life, to which I was once a stranger. I am like the good man and his wife who had kept a lighthouse for years. A visitor who came to see the lighthouse, looking out from the window over the waste of waters, asked the good woman, "Are you not afraid of a night when the storm is out and the big waves dash right over the lantern? Do you not fear that the lighthouse and all that is in it will be carried away?" The woman remarked that the idea never occurred to her now. She had lived there so long that she felt as safe on the lone rock as ever she did when she lived on the mainland. As for her husband, when asked if he did not feel anxious when the wind blew a hurricane, he answered, "Yes, I feel anxious to keep the lamps well trimmed, and the light burning, lest any vessel should be wrecked." All to anxiety about the safety of the lighthouse, or his own personal security in it, he had outlived all that. Even so it is with me: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." From henceforth let no man trouble me with doubts and questionings, I bear in my soul the proofs of the Spirit's truth and power, and I will have none of your artful reasonings. The gospel to me is truth: I am content to perish if it be not true. I risk my soul's eternal fate upon the truth of the gospel, and I know no risk in it. My one concern is to keep the lamps burning, that I may thereby enlighten others. Only let the Lord give me oil enough to feed my lamp, so that I may cast a ray across the dark and treacherous sea of life, and I am well content. Now, troubled seeker, if it be so, that your minister and many others in whom you confide have found perfect peace and rest in the gospel, why should not you? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do not his words do good to them that walk uprightly? Will not you also try their saving virtue?

In conclusion, just a hint to you. The words of God do good to those who walk uprightly. If they do no good to you, may it not be that you are walking crookedly? Have you given up all secret sin? How can you hope to get peace with God if you live according to your own lusts? Give up the hopeless hope. You must come right out from the love of sin if you would be delivered from the guilt of sin. You cannot have your sin and go to heaven: you must either give up sin or give up hope. "Repent" is a constant exhortation of the Word of God. Quit the sin which you confess. Flee the evil which crucified your Lord. Sin forsaken is through the blood of Jesus turned into sin forgiven. If you cannot find freedom in the Lord, the straitness is not with the Spirit of God, but your sin lieth at the door blocking up the gangway of grace. Is the Spirit of God straitened? No, his words "do good to them that walk uprightly," and if you in sincerity of heart will quit your sin, and believe in Christ, you also shall find peace, and hope, and rest. Try it, and see if it be not so. Amen.

Micah 2:8 Sermon Notes

C H Spurgeon

Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy. — Micah 2:8

WHEN men are in trouble they are apt to blame God. But the blame lies with themselves. "Are these his doings?" (verse 7). Does the good Lord arbitrarily cause sorrows? No, they are the fruit of sin, the result of backsliding.

The Lord here answers Israel's complaint of him by a deeply truthful complaint of them.

They should not have wondered that they suffered, for they had become enemies to God, and thus enemies to themselves.

I. LET US LISTEN TO THE GRIEVOUS CHARGE.

There is a deep pathos about this as coming from the God of love.

1. They were his own people. "My people:" God has enemies enough without his own beloved ones becoming such. It is horrible

ingratitude and treachery for the chosen to rebel.

2. They had risen up "as an enemy." Faithless friends wound keenly, and are often more bitter than other antagonists. For favored ones to rise up as foes is cruel indeed.

3. They had lately done this: "even of late," — "yesterday;" in the margin. The sin is fresh, the wound is bleeding, the offense is rank. A fit of willfulness was on them.

4. They had done this wantonly (see latter part of verse). They picked a quarrel with One who is "averse from war." God would have our love, yet we turn against him without cause.

How far may this indictment lie against us?

II. LET US HEAR THE MORE GRIEVOUS EVIDENCE BY WHICH THE CHARGE IS SUBSTANTIATED.

Taking the words "my people" as referring to all professing Christians, many of them "rise up as an enemy" from the fact of—

1. Their separation from their Lord. "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). They walk not in communion with him, neither are they diligent in his service, nor careful in obedience, nor consecrated to his cause.

2. Their worldliness. By this the Lord's jealousy is moved, for the world is set up as his rival in the heart. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4).

3. Their unbelief, which stabs at his honor, his veracity, his immutability (1 John 1:10). A man cannot treat another more maliciously than by calling him a liar.

4 Their heresies, fighting against his revealed truth. It is wretched work when the church and its ministers oppose the gospel. It is to be feared that this is by no means uncommon in these degenerate days.

5. Their unholiness. Unholy professors are, par excellence, "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18).

6. Their lukewarmness: by which they sicken their Savior (Rev. 3:16), grieve his Spirit (Eph. 4:30), encourage sinners in sin (Ezek. 16:54), and discourage seekers.

By these, and other miserable courses of action, those who should be the friends of God are often found to be "risen up as an enemy."

III. LET US HEARKEN TO MOST GRIEVOUS WARNINGS.

No good can possibly come of opposition to the Lord; but the most painful evils will inevitably ensue.

1. In the case of true Christians, there will come to them heavy chastisements and humiliations. If we walk contrary to the Lord, he will walk contrary to us (Lev. 26:23-24).

2. With these will come the keenest regrets, and agonies of heart. It may be pleasant to go down By-path Meadow, but to return to the King's highway will cost many a groan and tear.

3. In the case of mere professors, there will soon come abandonment of profession, immorality, seven-fold wickedness, etc.

4. To such may also come special punishments, which will make them a terror to the universe of God.

Be anxious to be truly reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus.

Abide in peace with God by yielding to his Spirit.

Increasingly love and honor him, that no root of bitterness may ever spring up between him and you.

Home-Thrusts

It is not, perhaps, that we are determinably his enemies, but his love is so great that he feels very keenly the slightest swerving of our hearts from him. So much so that he that is not with him is against him, he that turns aside from his friendship is felt to be "an enemy." — From "Wounded in the House of his Friends," by F. M.

Sin will cause repenting work, even for the children of God. The sins of the wicked pierce Christ's side, but the sins of the godly plunge the spear into his heart.

Carlyle, speaking of the changes made by time, says, "How tragic to me is the sight of old friends; a thing I always really shrink

from!" Sin has made still more painful changes in some once numbered amongst the friends of God.

Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates, the king of Pontus, sending a crown to Caesar at the time he was in rebellion against him, he refused the present, saying, "Let him first lay down his rebellion, and then I will receive his crown." There are many who set a crown of glory upon the head of Christ by a good profession, and yet plant a crown of thorns upon his head by an evil conversation. — Secker

After poor Sabat, an Arabian, who had professed faith in Christ by the means of the labors of the Rev. H. Martyn, had apostatized from Christianity, and written in favor of Mohammedanism, he was met at Malacca by the late Rev. Dr. Milne, who proposed to him some very pointed questions, in reply to which, he said, "I am unhappy! I have a mountain of burning sand on my head. When I go about, I know not what I am doing!" It is indeed an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord our God. — Bate's Cyclopaedia

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,

Thou art not so unkind

As man's ingratitude;

Thy tooth is not so keen,

Because thou art not seen,

Although thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze thou bitter sky,

Thou cost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot:

Though more the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp

As friend remembered not.— Shakespeare

Micah 2:10. A CLARION CALL TO SAINTS AND SINNERS.

NO. 2225

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 11TH, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 2ND, 1891.

"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." — Micah 2:10.

There is a miserable tendency in men to cling to things that are seen. Though that which we behold is only temporal and shadowy, lacking any true substance or permanence; though the things round about us can only endure for a little while, and then will vanish away; yet we give our hearts to them, and are ensnared by their false glitter and glamour. Like the poor birds that light on bird-lime and cannot get away, we are entangled by the things of time and sense, instead of rising; as on eagle wings, to a higher sphere. Forgetting that the soul of man cannot be satisfied with the poor baubles of earth, nor his yearning heart filled with the fleeting joys of time, we often put away from us the things that are unseen and eternal. One of the most needful words for us to hear at such a time is this, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

Suppose that the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt, and were on the way to Canaan, instead of living in tents, and moving as the fiery cloudy pillar guided them, had taken it into their heads to build houses and cities and temples wherever they halted, as if they were to stop in the wilderness for ever; would they not have missed much by such a plan? In the wilderness, not only would all who came out of Egypt have perished, but their children and their children's children would also have found graves in the desert, nor ever have seen the goodly land promised to their fathers. On the contrary, as you know, they lived in their canvas cities: when the cloud moved, every tent was struck, and they began the march; when the cloud halted, they rested under canvas still, never knowing how long they would continue in any one place, always expecting that they would be on the move again, seeing that they had not yet come to the land that flowed with milk and honey. Well they knew that in the wilderness was no abiding place for them; for the sand which was all around them yielded them no meat; and if their food had not dropped from above, they would

have had no supply from the barren desert. They were strangers and pilgrims with God, and sojourners, as were their fathers.

Now, our sad tendency is to be building cities, digging out foundations, laying courses of brick, and saying, "Here I am going to rest. I have journeyed long enough; and now I have come to a place where I can say, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'" It is a sorry business when the heirs of heaven wish to dwell in the wilderness, and when men who have an inheritance on the other side of Jordan forgot the land that God hath given them by covenant, and seek to enjoy their portion in this life. We do not wonder that the ungodly do so: they may well make as much as they can of their little enjoyment here; for, unless they repent of their evil way, that is all that they will ever have. I do not wonder that such as have their lot in this life should seek after carnal merriment, fleshly pleasures, and the giddy dance. What have they more? It is not astonishing to see the swine greedy at the trough, pushing one another aside as they struggle to get their wash. But when those who have been redeemed with a strong hand and an outstretched arm sink into worldly conformity, worse, because more deadening, than the slavery of Egypt, then indeed we see the sad havoc sin can work, and mourn because of it.

Unawakened men have not a thought above these minor things; and yet if they could for once shake off the spell that has lulled to sleep their immortal spirits, and turned them into comrades of the brutes, they would begin to feel that this is not their rest, and would hear a voice saying to them, "Arise ye, and depart." Perchance they would even answer, "I will arise, and go to my Father. I will leave the husks with which I fain would have filled myself, and I will eat of the bread, whereof in my Father's house there is enough and to spare." But the trumpet call to "arise" is not only needed by prodigals in the far country. Careless professors, who once ran well, but have been hindered, and who now rest content with the world, as if they were to stay here for ever, require to be roused from their slumber. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." God means his church to be a separated people on the earth. Our citizenship is in heaven; yet too many of us, and, perhaps, all of us at times, fall into the ways of the unregenerate, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, even if we do them not ourselves. Because of this slothful and carnal tendency, even in the best of us, it is continually necessary that the rousing call should come, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

I am going to talk, first, to God's people, and sound an alarm for them. Then I shall have a word for awakened sinners, and shall sound the trumpet also in their midst.

I. First, I shall view the text as A Clarion Note For Believers In Christ.

As a soldier hears the bugle in the early morning, and starts up ready for the duty of the day, so may every servant of Christ, who hears these words, arise girded for service! The soldier, at the sound of the awakening call, must forsake the warmest couch, and turn out to take his place in the ranks. With hope of a similar result would I sound the trumpet to-day. Let the clarion note ring out shrill and clear, "Arise ye, and depart."

To begin, I remark that there are occasions when this call comes especially to us. It may be heard in our everyday life above the din and bustle, but it is most needed when perhaps we are least inclined to listen to it. "Arise ye, and depart."

This note needs to be sounded in the ears of saints, when they begin to be comfortable. When you have been going up the Hill Difficulty with a very heavy pull, you have come to the harbour on the side of the hill, which has a seat very hospitably provided by the Lord of the way; and there is a table put in front of the seat, so that you can sit down, and, if so minded, put your arms on the table, and have a good nap. Now, these harbours are built for the refreshment of pilgrims; but they are not meant for them to sleep in. They may sit still, and gather strength with which to go on up the hill; they may look back, and be grateful that they have climbed so far; but they must not go to sleep. If they do, it will happen to them, as it did to one Christian of whom Mr. Bunyan wrote, who lost his roll of assurance there, and had to come back again and search for it with many tears. If any of you are very comfortable just now, and things are going well with you; if, after a long struggle, the tide has now turned, and you are floating along without needing either oar or sail, I would caution you to beware; —

"For more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests bursting o'er my head."

Dear child of God, when you begin to be very comfortable, unless you take care to be very grateful, and sanctify your prosperity, you will be likely to drift into a sad state. I take down the trumpet, and venture to come very close to you, and, though it may seem a rude thing to blow a blast right in your ear, yet I will do it; and this is the sound: "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." God has given you many blessings, but you will turn them into curses if you make them to be your god. Jonah had a gourd, but when he made a god of his gourd, it was very soon withered. Take heed when all things go well with you here below, lest you begin to be glued to this world, and find your comfort here. It will not do; God will not permit it. If you say, like David, in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;" you may soon have to add like him, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

This note, also, is very necessary in the ears of Christian people, when they begin to fraternize with the world. Nothing but evil can

come of such association; for “what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?” But you will say, “We have had some nice company lately; we have invited to our house some very decent people. It is true that we had no family prayer that night; we could not bring out the Bible, and read a chapter before them, for we did not know if they would like it; yet, in spite of that, they were nice sort of people. We are going to their house another night; we do not quite know how they will propose to spend the evening, but we shall have to put up with their way of doing things, because, you see, if you are in the world you must do as the world does.” Now, friends, I shall, without asking your leave, blow my trumpet on both sides of your head; and I shall give a very loud blast, too, as my friend Mr. Manton Smith sometimes does when he uses his silver cornet. “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” Beware when the world loves you, lest that which attracts them towards you be something that ought not to be there. Beware when men of the world are very fond of your society; for then surely you must have got out of touch with your Master, who says, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” It is well, if consistent with righteousness, to have everybody’s love; but when saints begin to be the admiration of the ungodly, depend upon it, there is something about them that God does not admire, an unhallowed conformity that is a signal of danger. When the world patronizes the church, the church will need tenfold grace to maintain her spirituality, just as on an ocean steamer any speed, beyond a certain limit, is only attained by an expenditure of power altogether out of proportion to the increase of the distance traveled. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” Such praise is not for good soldiers of Jesus Christ. If the enemy begins to love one of the king’s generals, the king may half suspect that his general is turning traitor. God save us from such treachery! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So again I sound the trumpet: “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

Peradventure, there are some who are neither beginning to be comfortable, nor to fraternize with the world, but to whom this trumpet-note will still come with special emphasis; for the Lord’s people need this call when they dream of long life on earth. You may, perhaps, have lived a long time now without any sickness or illness. You are certainly getting a little grey, your hair tells of the passing of years; still, your father lived to a good old age; so did your grandfather; and you reckon that you also will live for a long time to come. You have heard this last week, perhaps, of the deaths of several people who were younger than you are; but you do not reckon upon dying. Far from it: you have not even made your will yet, nor have you anything in order for your departure. A long stretch of health has a tendency to make us think that we are immortal. But though we may imagine this to be the case, the worms do not think so. The wood which will make your coffin may already be sawn, and the linen which will be your shroud may be all ready. There is a spot of land where you must lie, unless the Lord should suddenly come to his temple. Here, certainly, we have no continuing city; and therefore we ought not to make this world our rest. Dear friends who have been here one Sabbath-day have been called away before the next came round; and some who have seemed to be best in health have been the very persons who have gone first. Wherefore, my soul, stand thou on tiptoe, be not flat-footed, as some beasts are; have thou thy wings always ready for flight, so that, if thy Lord should come at cock-crow, or at daybreak, or at midnight, thou shalt be equally ready, at his bidding, to be up and away! I sound for myself, and for my beloved friends, this clarion note: “Boot and saddle, up and prepare. Arise ye, and depart.” To whom that note may come with greatest point I cannot tell, for I am no prophet; but let it come to us all. Let none of us begin to strike root here below, for this is not our rest.

Having thus sounded this note, I make a second remark. There is an argument by which this call is greatly strengthened. The bugle-note “Arise ye, and depart,” is made doubly shrill by the statement that follows, “This is not your rest.” You see, that is given as a reason for our action; the word “for”, which joins these two clauses of the text, being used in the sense of “because.” At times this argument appeals to us with special force. Of this reason and these sensors let me now speak.

Remember, child of God, that you have a rest of another sort. “This is not your rest.” “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” That happy home, that flourishing business, is not to be your abiding place. You would not like the change, I am sure, if the best portion here below might be yours for ever instead of your dwelling-place up above.

“Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys,
The glories of the place
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams
Of his o’erflowing grace.”

What must it be to be there, where saints and angels find a heaven in beholding the face of the Lord of glory, and paying their humble adoration before him! O sirs, if we had a palace here below, and parks and gardens reaching too far for a man to travel through them in a day; yea, if we had all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, we would not even then say, “This is our rest,” nor consent to change heaven for such things as these. What is there that we could possess on this round globe, with all its treasures, at all comparable with the eternal felicity, the rivers of pleasure that are at God’s right hand for evermore? As you attempt to make the comparison, you will each one of you say, “I must not and I cannot cleave to these poor things below; for my rest is not here. Thank God that it is not here!”

I think you will hear this call very distinctly when troubles come. When a man begins to have pain of body; when the one who is dearer to him than his life sickens before him, and is carried to the grave; when everything goes amiss with him in business and daily life; he does not then so much need my trumpet; for already he has heard the call sounding very loudly, and there are many things saying to him, "This is not your rest." He knows that it is not; he is so troubled, that he begins to sit loose to all earthly things. He is like one at sea, tossed up and down with the billows; wave upon wave comes rolling over him, and he says, "Now I clearly see that this is not my rest." Come, then, tried child of God, at this moment, let this word sound as sweet music to you rather than as a disturbing trumpet-blast. Let it be as a heart-note that can lull you to peace. "This is not your rest." Do not wonder, therefore, if you find thorns and thistles growing here; your paradise lies in another land, where no thorn or trial shall be brought forth to trouble and annoy you.

"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours."

The troubles of this life cause us to hasten forward to cross that Jordan, and the call is thus all the more powerful. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

We hear this same note when success is enjoyed. I think that the time in which I have been most humbled before God, and in which I have been lowest in spirit, is the time when mercies have been multiplied, and I have met with some great success. Though it seems very strange, I look back upon the hours which have immediately followed some great triumph in the service of my Lord as the saddest which I have spent. I could fight my Lord's battles with both hands; but when the day was won, those same hands seemed nerveless. When this house was in building, I was able to face every difficulty, as it arose, full of earnestness and zeal, and with unshaken confidence; but when the place was opened, and the work completed, I felt like Elijah, who was faint after he had done the Master's service with the priests of Baal. Ah, dear friends, God has only to give you what you want, to make you feel the emptiness of it! If you are his child, the more you have the less you will see in it. The child of God, who has possessions in this life, is just the man who says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." When you look at that which has been bestowed, you say, "Why was I so troubled to get this? I thank God for it, as his gift; but there is nothing in it apart from his giving it to me. Toil and trouble and care come with increase of goods. This, this is not my rest." If any young man here thinks that if he gets on in business, and reaches a point when he can retire upon a competence, he will then have reached his rest, he is very greatly mistaken. If he is a child of God, and if he gets all that his heart wishes for, he will find that there is nothing satisfying in it whatsoever. There is, in God, an all-sufficiency; but in all the things of this life, apart from the grace of God, there is no solid satisfaction or rest.

Beloved, I am sure that we feel that this is not our rest when we have gracious seasons. Do we not sometimes sit in this house of prayer and feel as if we would like to sit here for ever? Last Sunday morning, when I had done preaching, Brother Stott said that he did not want to go; he said that his willing soul would stay in such a frame as this; and I suspect that there were a great many more in the congregation who, like the preacher, felt the same. A brother was describing to me the effect of a certain amusement upon him — a very proper amusement, in which there was no wrong whatever; but he said, "Well, you know, I felt like a man who had gone out of a warm house into the cold. There was nothing in it for me, though I saw others very much enjoying it; but I have been used to better things than that, and I cannot get on with it." I believe that such is the experience of all God's people, who delight themselves in him, with reference to the pleasures of the worldly. You will generally notice that when the believer gets near to God, and tastes the unseen joys, and eats the bread that was made in heaven, all the feasts of earth, all its amusements, and all its glories seem very flat, stale, and unprofitable. It is like drinking ditch-water after having slaked your thirst from the cool brooks that come from the snows of Lebanon. After having laid our heads in Jesus' bosom, we feel, with regard to the world, "No, this is not our rest." We have laid hold on something better, more substantial, more satisfying and enduring; and when we come to the best the world can give, we, somehow, turn our backs upon it, and cry, "This is not our rest."

Surely we feel this strongly, and hear very clearly the clarion note, "Arise ye, and depart," when our many friends are taken home. I can scarcely look upon any part of the Tabernacle without saying to myself, "Such a friend used to sit there, and such a friend there; and here, behind me, certain of my kind and good elders and deacons used to sit." I cannot look round without missing many. When you get well on in years, you will find that your best friends are on the other side of the river, and that some of the dearest you have had are gone before you. When you think of it, you say to yourself, "I, too, must arise and depart; for this is not my rest." I have heard that sailors, when they leave England, drink to the health of those they leave behind them, till they get a certain distance on, and within so many weeks of the port to which they are sailing; then they change the toast, and drink to the health of those that are before them, whom they hope soon to see. It might be better for the sailors, and none the worse for their friends, if they grasped the idea that such drinking tends to the health of neither; but such I understand is their custom, and undoubtedly there is such a change of outlook in the Christian life. I have nearly reached that state in which I am thinking more of those before me than of those behind me or with me. We are looking forward to the grand reunion, when those who went before us shall again appear, and we shall, with them, be welcomed by our Lord into everlasting habitations. With such anticipations, we can rejoice to

hear the bugle sound again and again, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

In the third place, notice that there is a fact by which this call is further enforced. In the text there is another expression which puts confidence into this bugle-note, and gives us a new reason for continuing our pilgrim march. The reasons which exist in ourselves for answering the trumpet-call are not the only ones; others may be found all around us, and I ask your attention to this for a moment. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You cannot go out into the world without feeling that it is polluted; therefore heed well the word which comes to you, "Arise ye and depart,"

The call receives new strength by the pollution which is around us. Where do you live? You are a very happy man if you live in a part of London which is not defiled. Can you go down any of our streets without hearing conversation that makes you feel that the place is polluted? This region, indeed, I may say with deep sorrow, is polluted; and there are lower depths still. The newspapers bear daily testimony to the awful extent the pollution has reached; and the terrible poison seems to be continually spreading. Do you not feel, if you know anything of the grace of God, that you cannot for ever live in the midst of such evil? Even Lot, amongst the people of Sodom, "dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." To him one day there came, by angelic messengers, the call to arise and depart. In his heart of hearts he must have been glad to get away. We, too, because of the pollution that surrounds us, should learn that this is not our rest.

But what shall I say of the way in which the call is enforced by the pollution which comes home to us, even the defilement of our own house, of our own business, and of our own daily experience? I am sure that, if you look well into it, you will see sin in even your holy things; and if there is sin in your holy things, certainly there will be much that grieves God, and should grieve you, in your ordinary daily life. Within your domestic circle you may have those that make you feel, "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You have those whom you love, for whom you pray with deep anxiety, who make you often realize that your relationships in life are both strained and stained. How many a godly man has to say with David, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! Yes, this is not our rest: the evil comes into such close contact with us, that we long to be away from it all. We seek to arise, and depart from the pollution which seems to cling to us like a wet garment. Thus the call is greatly enforced.

It becomes more forcible because of the holiness for which we sigh. Look at your own heart; examine your own thoughts, your own words; and even those actions which are right in motive. How often pride comes in! You say to yourselves, "I did that very well indeed," and then the good deed becomes polluted; or you trust in yourself, and distrust God; and the little self-confidence, or the little want of faith in God, will soon pollute that which you bring to the Lord. Oh, no, we can never rest till we get where there is no sin!

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below."

but we shall never be content until we get up where Satan cannot tempt, and where corruption will be done with for ever; —

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Blow the bugle again. Ring out the note with clarion clearness:

"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted."

In the fourth place, we must not forget that there is a danger by which this call is rendered loudest. There is one more note that gives now intensity to it, when it is added. "Because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." Upon this I will say to the children of God that the things of this world are our destruction. There is nothing here that helps us on our way to God. It is a wilderness at the very best.

"Pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow;
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow."

God keeps his own and preserves them to the end, but they get nothing out of this world save the discipline of avoiding it. Vain world! It is no friend to grace; it does not help us on to God. Were it not for grace, it would be our destruction.

Look at the temptations around you Are you never forced to cry, "Good Lord, help me"? Remember Bunyan's pilgrim, Mr. Stand-fast, when Madame Bubble encountered him. It was on the Enchanted Ground that she met him, and offered him her purse, and all manner of carnal delights. What did poor Stand-fast do? In an agony, he fell down and prayed. Because he was poor, he was tempted by her purse, and his heart began to go after vanity: what could he do but kneel down and pray? Ah, this is not your rest! It

is a place for wrestling rather than for resting; a place for prayer, not for sleep. It is not your rest, for it is polluted; and "because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction," unless the grace of God shall prevent. Does not this consideration make the call become very loud?

Have you not felt the deadening influence of the world? Can you busy people be up and down the city, or in your shops all day, without feeling that these things tend to harden you? Grace comes in and raises you above it; but the thing itself, and the care and the thought that you are obliged to give to it, have a tendency to make you sink instead of rise. How grateful you ought to be for your Sabbaths! and how thankful you should be for this little sanctuary in the middle of the week, this appointed evening, when you can steal away, and shake the earth off your foot, and brush the dust from your clothes, and go back to your toil refreshed and strengthened! God grant us grace to live above the world! The world itself will not help us: it will be our destruction if we do not arise, and join the company who "Ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Thus the call waxes long and loud.

But it becomes loudest of all when we have to mourn ever the fatal effect of worldliness in others. When I look over the church-book, I cannot help shedding tears sometimes. There is the name of a brother who used to pray so sweetly: where has he gone? There is the name of a sister who used to be one of the most earnest followers of Christ: where is she now? I should hardly like to know where they are; and yet they did once seem to run well. I remember a brother who fell into gross sin, of whom I never heard any more; and one said, "If that man is not a child of God, I am not one myself." I could not help saying, "Hush, hush! do not talk of staking your soul against any other man's. You know but little about yourself, and you do not know anything about him." I did not like to hear such a thing said; and yet I have known some of whom I could almost have said the same. We have thought, "He must be a child of God;" but, after all, the man has turned aside to crooked ways, and proved that he never had the grace of God in his heart. Ah! dear friends, while those things happen, "this is not your rest." As well seek for shelter in an enemy's country, or seek for rest in a storm at sea, as expect to find anything like rest here. No; "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction," unless the God of infinite love and mercy shall keep you as the apple of his eye.

Thus I have spoken to those who are believers in Christ. God bless them! Now I turn to others for the few minutes that remain.

II. Secondly, my text may be viewed as An Arousing Note For Awakened Sinners.

"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." In dealing with this head, I want to say a word to those who are thoughtful, but are not yet believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire to take my silver trumpet, and come to each one of you, and sound in your ear that same note which I tried to sound in the ears of God's people. "Arise ye, and depart." Get up. Sleep no more. Lie in indifference no longer. God help you to say, "I will arise, and go to my Father"! You must clear out of your present position, or you will be lost. The name of the place where you now dwell is the City of Destruction, and if you would escape, you must run for it. Flee from the wrath to come.

You are called upon to depart from sin and self. You must, through divine grace, be ready to quit self, and the righteousness that is of self, and sin, and the follies that go with sin. "Arise ye, and depart." O man, or woman, if you stay where you are by nature, you stay in a land which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, is given up to destruction by fire from heaven! "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Ye that are in a state of nature, a state of guilt and condemnation, arise ye, and depart. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

And here is the reason why you should thus arise and depart: you have found no rest in the world: "This is not your rest." I put it to you, have you found any true peace in the ways of sin? Ah! if you have been aroused to see your state before God, you know that you are not happy. How can you be? An immortal soul contort with mortal things! "Too low they build who build beneath the stars." He has a poor treasury who has not a treasury in heaven. If all your possessions be here, it is a poor all; for you love it when you die; or it may at any moment be taken from you while you live. You have no rest now. You know many men and women who may enjoy themselves as much as they can, so far as means are concerned; but they never really enjoy themselves at all. They used to get pleasure when they were younger; but now they go to the same places, and they come away dissatisfied. I am glad of it; I am glad that the Lord will not allow them to find satisfaction in the joys of this life.

And if you had a rest here, you would soon have to leave it. What if you had to leave all you have to-night? What if, to-night, instead of my voice, it should be the angel who should sound the trumpet, "Arise ye, and depart"? What if, instead of going home to-night, you went into the eternal state to meet your God and Judge? How would it be with you? How can you rest, if you are unable to give a joyful answer to those questions? You are hanging over the mouth of hell by a single thread, and that thread is breaking. Only a gasp for breath, only a stopping of the heart for a single moment, and you will be in an eternal world, without God, without hope, without forgiveness. Oh, can you face it? I pray God that you may not have a brazen countenance, but may feel that it is time for

you to listen to the voice that says, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."

But another reason why you should hasten to flee is because of the sins of your life. You have polluted it. And what happens to you? Why, the older you get the more polluted you are. What a mercy it is that men do not live eight or nine hundred years now as they used to do! What monsters of sin would be on the earth if men kept on doing evil at the rate some of them do now! Living eighty years, sinners get to be quite sufficiently putrid in talk and life. But if they lived eight hundred years, this world would almost be a second hell. Well might God, in the olden days, wash the world clean, when there were sinners upon it so ripe for destruction, so rotten in their lives. Because sin thus fouls your nest, "Arise ye, and depart."

With all the earnestness of my heart would I urge you to arise from your sin, and hasten away from your peril, for destruction threatens you. You that have sinned cannot afford to live here always; for, even now, your sins begin to come home to you. They will come home even more as you grow older. When sickness begins to take away your spirits, and departed health leaves you without the possibility of your present joys, your state will be almost too terrible for contemplation. Oh, I would not be the man who has lived a sinful life, and who is about to die without hope! A pack of wolves around a man must be nothing to it. I heard the other day of one, in India, who was thought to be dead; and the Parsee method, you know, is not to bury their dead, they leave them naked in what are called the "Towers of Silence", where there are vultures always waiting; and within three or four hours after a corpse is laid there, there is no flesh left upon the bones. One poor man, who was only in a swoon, was thought to be dead, and was laid out in the tower; the vultures came, and one or two of them tore his flesh so terribly, that he started up as from dreadful dream. There were the vultures coming to devour him while he was yet alive; and defending himself as best he could, he managed to escape. What a plight to be in, lying in the place of the dead, surrounded by the cruel beaks of those fierce, ravenous birds! But in a far more awful position is a sinner when his sins come home to him. Only the Lord can drive those vultures away, and restore him to life and safety. He comes for your deliverance, and it is his voice that says to-day, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." Fly to him now; for if not, this rest of yours, that you seem to have, will destroy you. You will grow more worldly and more callous as the years go on. He that is filthy will become yet more filthy. As an old man you will say, "It is no use talking to me. If I could have my curly hair back again, and sit on my mother's knee once more, I might feel something, but now I am given up to hardness." The world will ruin you, as the world has ruined its millions, and is ruining its thousands still. Fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly this moment! God help you! I shall be well rewarded for having preached if but one soul should be aroused to flee away to Christ my Lord. And why should not many more, in answer to our prayers? The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Micah 6:3 Sermon Notes

Micah 6:3. — The Lord's Appeal to his own People
C H Spurgeon

Oh my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.— Micah 6:3

This is a portion of Jehovah's pleading with his people.

He has called upon the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth to hear the suit between him and Israel.

Far be it from us to trifle when God has a controversy with us, for to him it is a matter of deep solemnity. In condescending grace he makes much of the affection of his people, and he will not lose it without effort.

We have before us—

I. A PITEOUS EXCLAMATION. "O my people!"

Is it not remarkable that such language should be used by the Eternal God?

1 It is the voice of solemn earnestness.

2. It is the cry of sorrow. The interjection is wet with tears.

3. It is the appeal of love. Love injured, but living, pleading, striving, entreating.

4. It is the language of desire. Divine love yearns for the reconciliation of the rebel: it pines to have his loyal affection.

The Lord calls a revolted nation "my people" still Grace is stronger than sin. Eternal love is not founded upon our merits.

II. A PAINFUL FACT. "Wearied thee;"

Israel acted as if they were tired of their God.

1. They were weary of his name. Baal and Ashtaroth had become the fashion, and the living God was despised.
2. They were weary of his worship. The sacrifice, the priest, the holy place, prayer, praise, etc.; all these were despised.
3. They were weary of obedience to his laws, though they were right, and just, and meant for their good.
4. They were weary of his restraints: they desired liberty to ruin themselves by transgression.

The parallel between ourselves and Israel lies upon the surface.

In the following points, and many more, certain professors prove their weariness of God—

They give up nearness of communion.

They abandon preciseness of walking.

They fail in fullness of consecration.

They cool down from intensity of zeal.

They lose the full assurance of faith, and other joys.

And all this because they are in reality weary of their God

This is a sorrow of sorrows to the great heart of love.

III. A PATIENT ENQUIRY. "What have I done unto thee?" etc.

Amazing love! God himself puts himself upon trial.

1. What single act of God could induce us to forsake his way? "What have I done unto thee?"
2. What continuous way of the Lord could have caused us weariness?

"Wherein have I wearied thee?"

3. What testimony of any kind can we bear against God? "Testify against me."

No answer is possible except the most unreserved confession that the Lord has done us no ill. The Lord is goodness itself, and unmingled kindness.

He has not wearied us with demands of offering.

He has not burdened us with austerities.

He has not tired us with monotones.

He has not denied us rest, but has even commanded it.

If wearied with our God, it is—

Because of our foolish waywardness.

Because of our fickle fancy.

Because of our feeble love to himself and holiness.

Or because we have misunderstood his commands.

By all that God has already done for us, let us cling to him.

By the superlative excellence of Jesus, let us be bound to him.

By the sacred power of the Holy Ghost, may we be kept loving to the end.

Quotations

Now there is one thing to which we need to call the attention of backsliders; and that is — that the Lord never forsook them; but that they forsook him! The Lord never left them; but they left him! And this, too, without a cause! He says, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" Is not God the same to-day as when you came to him first? Has God

changed? Men are apt to think that God has changed; but the change is with them. Backslider, I would ask you, "What iniquity is there in God, that you have left him, and gone far from him?"

Love does not like to be forgotten. You mothers would break your hearts if your children left you, and never wrote you a word, or sent any memento of their affection for you: and God pleads over backsliders as a parent over loved ones who have gone astray; and he tries to woo them back. He asks, "What have I done that you should have forsaken me?" The most tender and loving words to be found in the whole of the Bible are from Jehovah to those who have left him without a cause. — O. L. Moody

Let those tempted to depart from the Lord remember the answer of Christian to Apollyon, when the latter sought to persuade him to turn back, and forsake his Lord: "O thou destroying Apollyon, to speak truth, I like his service, his wages, his servants, his government, his company, and country, better than thine; and, therefore, leave off to persuade me further: I am his servant, and I will follow him."

Polycarp, being required by an infidel judge to blaspheme Christ, made him this witty and devout answer: "Eighty-six years have I lived, neither did he once harm me in any one thing; why, then, should I blaspheme my God, which hath neither hindered me nor injured me?" We cannot charge our God with any wrong, our gracious Lord with any hardness, injury, or unkindness towards us; but must always, with Polycarp, acknowledge his exceeding bounty and unspeakable goodness. — Richard Meredeth

"O my people, what have I done unto thee?" or, rather, what have I not done to do thee good? "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord," and not hear it only; was ever anything more evidencing and evincing than what I now allege? "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?" (Jer. 2:31). May I not well say unto you, as Themistocles did to his ungrateful countrymen, "What? are ye weary of receiving so many benefits from one man?" But say, What hurt have I ever done you? and wherein have I wearied you, or been troublesome to you? unless it be by daily loading you with lovingkindnesses (Ps. 68:19), and bearing with your provocations? Forgive me that injury (2 Cor. 12:13). — Trapp

"O my people, "etc. If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend, as the ten tribes did when they revolted from Rehoboam, that his yoke is too heavy for them; but can you pretend any such thing? What have I done to you that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you with the impositions of service, or the exaction of tribute? Have I made you to serve with an offering? (Isa. 43:23). — Matthew Henry