

Zechariah-Spurgeon Devotionals & Sermon Notes

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C H Spurgeon Devotionals

Zechariah 1:8

Morning and evening

“The myrtle trees that were in the bottom.” — Zechariah 1:8

The vision in this chapter describes the condition of Israel in Zechariah's day; but being interpreted in its aspect towards us, it describes the Church of God as we find it now in the world. The Church is compared to a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley. It is hidden, unobserved, secreted; courting no honour and attracting no observation from the careless gazer. The Church, like her head, has a glory, but it is concealed from carnal eyes, for the time of her breaking forth in all her splendour is not yet come. The idea of tranquil security is also suggested to us: for the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps, but down yonder where flows the stream which maketh glad the city of our God, the myrtles flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind. How great is the inward tranquility of God's Church! Even when opposed and persecuted, she has a peace which the world gives not, and which, therefore, it cannot take away: the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps the hearts and minds of God's people. Does not the metaphor forcibly picture the peaceful, perpetual growth of the saints? The myrtle sheds not her leaves, she is always green; and the Church in her worst time still hath a blessed verdure of grace about her; nay, she has sometimes exhibited most verdure when her winter has been sharpest. She has prospered most when her adversities have been most severe. Hence the text hints at victory. The myrtle is the emblem of peace, and a significant token of triumph. The brows of conquerors were bound with myrtle and with laurel; and is not the Church ever victorious? Is not every Christian more than a conqueror through him that loved him? Living in peace, do not the saints fall asleep in the arms of victory?

Zechariah 1:12-13

Morning and evening

“O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem? ... And the Lord answered the angel ... with good words and comfortable words.” — Zechariah 1:12,13

What a sweet answer to an anxious enquiry! This night let us rejoice in it. O Zion, there are good things in store for thee; thy time of travail shall soon be over; thy children shall be brought forth; thy captivity shall end. Bear patiently the rod for a season, and under the darkness still trust in God, for his love burneth towards thee. God loves the church with a love too deep for human imagination: he loves her with all his infinite heart. Therefore let her sons be of good courage; she cannot be far from prosperity to whom God speaketh “good words and comfortable words.” What these comfortable words are the prophet goes on to tell us: “I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” The Lord loves his church so much that he cannot bear that she should go astray to others; and when she has done so, he cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have his enemies afflict her: he is displeased with them because they increase her misery. When God seems most to leave his church, his heart is warm towards her. History shows that whenever God uses a rod to chasten his servants, he always breaks it afterwards, as if he loathed the rod which gave his children pain. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” God hath not forgotten us because he smites—his blows are no evidences of want of love. If this is true of his church collectively, it is of necessity true also of each individual member. You may fear that the Lord has passed you by, but it is not so: he who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting his own children. He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature he ever made, or the only saint he ever loved. Approach him and be at peace.

Zechariah 1:20

Morning and evening

“And the Lord shewed me four carpenters.” — Zechariah 1:20

In the vision described in this chapter, the prophet saw four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest; and the prophet asked, "What are these?" The answer was, "These are the horns which have scattered Israel." He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the church of God. There were four horns; for the church is attacked from all quarters. Well might the prophet have felt dismayed; but on a sudden there appeared before him four carpenters. He asked, "What shall these do?" These are the men whom God hath found to break those horns in pieces. God will always find men for his work, and he will find them at the right time. The prophet did not see the carpenters first, when there was nothing to do, but first the "horns," and then the "carpenters." Moreover, the Lord finds enough men. He did not find three carpenters, but four; there were four horns, and there must be four workmen. God finds the right men; not four men with pens to write; not four architects to draw plans; but four carpenters to do rough work. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the "horns" grow troublesome, the "carpenters" will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the church of God at any moment; there may be growing up in obscurity the valiant reformer who will shake the nations: Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools, and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London's poverty. The Lord knows where to find his servants. He hath in ambush a multitude of mighty men, and at his word they shall start up to the battle; "for the battle is the Lord's," and he shall get to himself the victory. Let us abide faithful to Christ, and he, in the right time, will raise up for us a defence, whether it be in the day of our personal need, or in the season of peril to his Church.

Zechariah 3:1

Morning and evening

"Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord." - Zechariah 3:1

In Joshua the high priest we see a picture of each and every child of God, who has been made nigh by the blood of Christ, and has been taught to minister in holy things, and enter into that which is within the veil. Jesus has made us priests and kings unto God, and even here upon earth we exercise the priesthood of consecrated living and hallowed service. But this high priest is said to be "standing before the angel of the Lord," that is, standing to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true believer. Every place is now God's temple, and his people can as truly serve him in their daily employments as in his house. They are to be always "ministering," offering the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise, and presenting themselves a "living sacrifice." But notice where it is that Joshua stands to minister, it is before the angel of Jehovah. It is only through a mediator that we poor defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. I present what I have before the messenger, the angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus; and through him my prayers find acceptance wrapped up in his prayers; my praises become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia from Christ's own garden. If I can bring him nothing but my tears, he will put them with his own tears in his own bottle for he once wept; if I can bring him nothing but my groans and sighs, he will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for he once was broken in heart, and sighed heavily in spirit. I myself, standing in him, am accepted in the Beloved; and all my polluted works, though in themselves only objects of divine abhorrence, are so received, that God smelleth a sweet savour. He is content and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian—"a priest— standing—before the angel of the Lord."

Zechariah 4:7

Mountains Turned to Plains

Faith's Checkbook

"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."—Zechariah 4:7

AT this hour a mountain of difficulty, distress, or necessity may be in our way, and natural reason sees no path over it, or through it, or round it. Let faith come in, and straightaway the mountain disappears and becomes a plain. But faith must first hear the word of the Lord, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This grand truth is a prime necessity for meeting the insurmountable trials of life.

I see that I can do nothing, and that all reliance on man is vanity. "Not by might." I see that no visible means can be relied on, but the force is in the invisible Spirit. God alone must work, and men and means must be nothing accounted of. If it be so that the Almighty God takes up the concerns of His people, then great mountains are nothing. He can remove worlds as boys toss balls about or drive them with their foot. This power He can lend to me. If the Lord bids me move an Alp, I can do it through His name. It may be a great mountain, but even before my feebleness it shall become a plain, for the Lord hath said it. What can I be afraid of with God on my side?

Zechariah 4:10

Morning and evening

"They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel."— Zechariah 4:10

Small things marked the beginning of the work in the hand of Zerubbabel, but none might despise it, for the Lord had raised up one who would persevere until the headstone should be brought forth with shoutings. The plummet was in good hands. Here is the comfort of every believer in the Lord Jesus; let the work of grace be ever so small in its beginnings, the plummet is in good hands, a master builder greater than Solomon has undertaken the raising of the heavenly temple, and he will not fail nor be discouraged till the topmost pinnacle shall be raised. If the plummet were in the hand of any merely human being, we might fear for the building, but the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in Jesus' hand. The works did not proceed irregularly, and without care, for the master's hand carried a good instrument. Had the walls been hurriedly run up without due superintendence, they might have been out of the perpendicular; but the plummet was used by the chosen overseer. Jesus is evermore watching the erection of his spiritual temple, that it may be built securely and well. We are for haste, but Jesus is for judgment. He will use the plummet, and that which is out of line must come down, every stone of it. Hence the failure of many a flattering work, the overthrow of many a glittering profession. It is not for us to judge the Lord's church, since Jesus has a steady hand, and a true eye, and can use the plummet well. Do we not rejoice to see judgment left to him?

The plummet was in active use—it was in the builder's hand; a sure indication that he meant to push on the work to completion. O Lord Jesus, how would we indeed be glad if we could see thee at thy great work. O Zion, the beautiful, thy walls are still in ruins! Rise, thou glorious Builder, and make her desolations to rejoice at thy coming.

Zechariah 6:13

Morning and evening

"He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory." — Zechariah 6:13

Christ himself is the builder of his spiritual temple, and he has built it on the mountains of his unchangeable affection, his omnipotent grace, and his infallible truthfulness. But as it was in Solomon's temple, so in this; the materials need making ready. There are the "Cedars of Lebanon," but they are not framed for the building; they are not cut down, and shaped, and made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord's house in Paradise. There are also the rough stones still in the quarry, they must be hewn thence, and squared. All this is Christ's own work. Each individual believer is being prepared, and polished, and made ready for his place in the temple; but Christ's own hand performs the preparation-work. Afflictions cannot sanctify, excepting as they are used by him to this end. Our prayers and efforts cannot make us ready for heaven, apart from the hand of Jesus, who fashioneth our hearts aright.

As in the building of Solomon's temple, "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house," because all was brought perfectly ready for the exact spot it was to occupy—so is it with the temple which Jesus builds; the making ready is all done on earth. When we reach heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no squaring us with affliction, no planing us with suffering. No, we must be made meet here—all that Christ will do beforehand; and when he has done it, we shall be ferried by a loving hand across the stream of death, and brought to the heavenly Jerusalem, to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord.

"Beneath his eye and care,

The edifice shall rise,

Majestic, strong, and fair,

And shine above the skies."

Zechariah 8:13 -

Excerpt from Spurgeon's sermon which demonstrates that he clearly believed in the restoration of a literal Israel and was not a proponent of the teaching that replaces Israel with the Church!...

AS these words came from the lips of Zechariah, doubtless they referred to the seed of Abraham, including the two tribes of Judah and the ten tribes of Israel. They have already received a minor fulfillment; but their most glorious accomplishment is yet to come. The Jews have for many a generation been cursed by all people. For ages no one had a good word or a kind look for the Jew. In every nation they have been persecuted, and

hunted like beasts of prey. The followers of the fierce Mohammed have not been their only enemies, for the children of the Babylonian harlot have equally thirsted for their blood. In our own country, in the dark ages, it was accounted God's service to afflict the Israelites, and the day upon which the Church celebrated our Savior's passion was chosen for the public stoning of his own brethren if they ventured into the streets. To be a Jew was, in the estimation of that era, to be deserving of all scorn and cruelty, and of no pity or consideration. To what exactions, to what fines, to what imprisonments and tortures, have not the sons of Jacob been subjected by the professed followers of the Messiah. It is perhaps the greatest of all modern miracles, that there should be one Jew upon earth who is a Christian for the treatment they have received from pretended Christians has been enough to make them hate the name of Jesus; it has been not simply villainous, but diabolical. Devils in hell could not be more cruel to their victims than professed Christians have been to the sons of Abraham. They have been a curse indeed. The whole vocabulary of abuse from "dog" down to "devil" has been exhausted upon them; among all nations they have been a hissing and a bye-word. But the day is coming, yea it dawns already, when the whole world shall discern the true dignity of the chosen seed, and shall seek their company, because the Lord hath blessed them. In that day when Israel shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for their sins, the Jew shall take his true rank among the nations as an elder brother and a prince. The covenant made with Abraham, to bless all nations by his seed, is not revoked; heaven and earth shall pass away, but the chosen nation shall not be blotted out from the book of remembrance. The Lord hath not cast away his people; he has never given their mother a bill of divorcement; he has never put them away; in a little wrath he hath hidden his face from them, but with great mercies will he gather them. The natural branches shall again be engrafted into the olive together with the wild olive graftings from among the Gentiles. In the Jew, first and chiefly, shall grace triumph through the King of the Jews. O time, fly thou with rapid wing, and bring the auspicious day...

Long has the Christian Church slept in forgetfulness of the Jew; even faithful men have scarce given a thought to Israel, and have left the Jew to perish, as though his heart were too hard to be melted by divine love.

I trust that mistake has been discovered, and that there are many now anxiously praying for the restoration of the glory unto Israel, but too many are still indifferent where earnestness is needed. May the Lord in his infinite mercy first put it into his people's hearts to pray for Israel, and then to work in love, and labor in faith: may he hasten in his own time the fulfillment of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then shall the whole earth be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. We may work and we may toil, but till Israel be gathered God's glory cannot be universal, nor even widely spread. Until the Jew acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the fullness of the times of restitution (Acts 3:20, 21) shall not have arrived. Make no tarrying O our Lord! Come quickly, and send thou as the herald of thy coming thine own brethren, who once despised thee when thou camest to thine own, and thine own received thee not. (Click for full sermon - [Zechariah 8:13 Once a Curse But Now a Blessing](#))

Zechariah 10:12

Free to Travel

Faith's Checkbook

"And I will strengthen them in the Lord: and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."—Zechariah 10:12

A SOLACE for sick saints. They have grown faint, and they fear that they shall never rise from the bed of doubt and fear; but the great Physician can both remove the disease and take away the weakness which has come of it. He will strengthen the feeble. This He will do in the best possible way, for it shall be "in Jehovah." Our strength is far better in God than in self. In the Lord it causes fellowship; in ourselves it would create pride. In ourselves it would be sadly limited, but in God it knows no bound.

When strength is given, the believer uses it. He walks up and down in the name of the Lord. What an enjoyment it is to walk abroad after illness, and what a delight to be strong in the Lord after a season of prostration! The Lord gives His people liberty to walk up and down, and an inward leisure to exercise that liberty. He makes gentlemen of us: we are not slaves who know no rest and see no sights, but we are free to travel at our ease throughout Immanuel's land.

Come, my heart, be thou no more sick and sorry; Jesus bids thee be strong and walk with God in holy contemplation. Obey His word of love.

Zechariah 11:2

Morning and evening

“Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen.” — Zechariah 11:2

When in the forest there is heard the crash of a falling oak, it is a sign that the woodman is abroad, and every tree in the whole company may tremble lest to-morrow the sharp edge of the axe should find it out. We are all like trees marked for the axe, and the fall of one should remind us that for every one, whether great as the cedar, or humble as the fir, the appointed hour is stealing on apace. I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple, which build their nests when the bells are tolling, and sleep quietly when the solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard death as the most weighty of all events, and be sobered by its approach. It ill behoves us to sport while our eternal destiny hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard—let us not trifle; it is furbished, and the edge is sharp—let us not play with it. He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool, he is a madman. When the voice of God is heard among the trees of the garden, let fig tree and sycamore, and elm and cedar, alike hear the sound thereof.

Be ready, servant of Christ, for thy Master comes on a sudden, when an ungodly world least expects him. See to it that thou be faithful in his work, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee. Be ready, parents, see that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, take care that your affairs are correct, and that you serve God with all your hearts, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. May we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the gracious commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant”

Zechariah 12:8

Clearly Supernatural

Faith's Checkbook

“In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.”—Zechariah 12:8

ONE of the best methods of the Lord's defending His people is to make them strong in inward might. Men are better than walls, and faith is stronger than castles.

The Lord can take the feeblest among us and make him like David, the champion of Israel. Lord, do this with me! Infuse thy power into me, and fill me with sacred courage that I may face the giant with sling and stone, confident in God.

The Lord can make His greatest champions far mightier than they are: David can be as God, as the angel of Jehovah. This would be a marvelous development, but it is possible, or it would not be spoken of. O Lord, work with the best of our leaders! Show us what thou art able to do—namely, to raise thy faithful servants to a height of grace and holiness which shall be clearly supernatural!

Lord, dwell in thy saints, and they shall be as God; put thy might into them, and they shall be as the living creatures who dwell in the presence of Jehovah. Fulfill this promise to thine entire church in this our day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Zechariah 13:9

The Dross Purged

Faith's Checkbook

Zechariah 13:9 He stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom.

GRACE transmutes us into precious metal, and then the fire and the furnace follow as a necessary consequence. Do we start at this? Would we sooner be accounted worthless that we might enjoy repose, like the stones of the field? This would be to choose the viler part: like Esau, to take the pottage, and give up the covenant portion. No, Lord; we will gladly be cast into the furnace rather than be cast out from Thy presence!

The fire only refines, it does not destroy. We are to be brought through the fire, not left in it. The Lord values His people as silver, and therefore He is at pains to purge away their dross. If we are wise, we shall rather welcome the refining process than decline it. Our prayer will be that our alloy may be taken from us rather than that we should be withdrawn from the crucible.

O Lord, Thou triest us indeed! We are ready to melt under the fierceness of the flame. Still, this is Thy way and Thy way is the best. Sustain us under the trial and complete the process of our purifying, and we will be Thine forever and ever.

Zechariah 14:7

Morning and evening

“At evening time it shall be light.” — Zechariah 14:7

Oftentimes we look forward with forebodings to the time of old age, forgetful that at eventide it shall be light. To many saints, old age is the choicest season in their lives. A balmy air fans the mariner's cheek as he nears the shore of immortality, fewer waves ruffle his sea, quiet reigns, deep, still and solemn. From the altar of age the flashes of the fire of youth are gone, but the more real flame of earnest feeling remains. The pilgrims have reached the land Beulah, that happy country, whose days are as the days of heaven upon earth. Angels visit it, celestial gales blow over it, flowers of paradise grow in it, and the air is filled with seraphic music. Some dwell here for years, and others come to it but a few hours before their departure, but it is an Eden on earth. We may well long for the time when we shall recline in its shady groves and be satisfied with hope until the time of fruition comes. The setting sun seems larger than when aloft in the sky, and a splendour of glory tinges all the clouds which surround his going down. Pain breaks not the calm of the sweet twilight of age, for strength made perfect in weakness bears up with patience under it all. Ripe fruits of choice experience are gathered as the rare repast of life's evening, and the soul prepares itself for rest.

The Lord's people shall also enjoy light in the hour of death. Unbelief laments; the shadows fall, the night is coming, existence is ending. Ah no, crieth faith, the night is far spent, the true day is at hand. Light is come, the light of immortality, the light of a Father's countenance. Gather up thy feet in the bed, see the waiting bands of spirits! Angels waft thee away. Farewell, beloved one, thou art gone, thou wavest thine hand. Ah, now it is light. The pearly gates are open, the golden streets shine in the jasper light. We cover our eyes, but thou beholdest the unseen; adieu, brother, thou hast light at even-tide, such as we have not yet.

Zechariah 14:7

Evening Brightens into Day

Faith's Checkbook

“It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”—Zechariah 14:7

IT is a surprise that it should be so; for all things threaten that at evening time it shall be dark. God is wont to work in a way so much above our fears and beyond our hopes that we are greatly amazed and are led to praise His sovereign grace. No, it shall not be with us as our hearts are prophesying: the dark will not deepen into midnight, but it will on a sudden brighten into day. Never let us despair. In the worst times let us trust in the Lord who turneth the darkness of the shadow of death into the morning. When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses appears; and when tribulation abounds, it is nearest its end.

This promise should assist our patience. The light may not fully come till our hopes are quite spent by waiting all day to no purpose. To the wicked the sun goes down while it is yet day: to the righteous the sun rises when it is almost night. May we not with patience wait for that heavenly light, which may be long in coming, but is sure to prove itself well worth waiting for?

Come, my soul, take up thy parable and sing unto Him who will bless thee in life and in death, in a manner surpassing all that nature has ever seen when at its best.

Zechariah 14:8

Morning and evening

“In summer and in winter shall it be.” — Zechariah 14:8

The streams of living water which flow from Jerusalem are not dried up by the parching heats of sultry midsummer any more than they were frozen by the cold winds of blustering winter. Rejoice, O my soul, that thou art spared to testify of the faithfulness of the Lord. The seasons change and thou changest, but thy Lord abides evermore the same, and the streams of his love are as deep, as broad and as full as ever. The heats of business cares and scorching trials make me need the cooling influences of the river of His grace; I may go at once and drink to the full from the inexhaustible fountain, for in summer and in winter it pours forth its flood. The upper springs are never scanty, and blessed be the name of the Lord, the nether springs cannot fail either. Elijah found Cherith dry up, but Jehovah was still the same God of providence. Job said his brethren were like deceitful brooks, but he found his God an

overflowing river of consolation. The Nile is the great confidence of Egypt, but its floods are variable; our Lord is evermore the same. By turning the course of the Euphrates, Cyrus took the city of Babylon, but no power, human or infernal, can divert the current of divine grace. The tracks of ancient rivers have been found all dry and desolate, but the streams which take their rise on the mountains of divine sovereignty and infinite love shall ever be full to the brim. Generations melt away, but the course of grace is unaltered. The river of God may sing with greater truth than the brook in the poem—

“Men may come, and men may go,

But I go on for ever.”

How happy art thou, my soul, to be led beside such still waters! never wander to other streams, lest thou hear the Lord’s rebuke, “What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt to drink of the muddy river?”

Zechariah 14:9

One King, One Lord

Faith's Checkbook

“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” —Zechariah 14:9

BLESSED prospect! This is no dream of an enthusiast, but the declaration of the infallible Word. Jehovah shall be known among all people, and His gracious sway shall be acknowledged by every tribe of man. Today it is far from being so. Where do any bow before the Great King? How much there is of rebellion! What lords many, and gods many, there are on the earth! Even among professed Christians what diversities of ideas there are about Him and His gospel! One day there shall be one King, one Jehovah, and one name for the living God. O Lord, hasten it! We daily cry, “Thy kingdom come.”

We will not discuss the question as to when this shall be, lest we lose the comfort of the certainty that it shall be. So surely as the Holy Ghost spake by His prophets, so surely shall the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord. Jesus did not die in vain. The Spirit of God worketh not in vain. The Father’s eternal purposes shall not be frustrated. Here, where Satan triumphed, Jesus shall be crowned, and the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign. Let us go our way to our daily work and warfare, made strong in faith.

Zechariah 14:20

All Turned to Holiness

Faith's Checkbook

“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD”—Zechariah 14:20

HAPPY day when all things shall be consecrated, and the horses’ bells shall ring out holiness to the Lord! That day has come to me. Do I not make all things holy to God? These garments, when I put them on or take them off, shall they not remind me of the righteousness of Christ Jesus, my Lord? Shall not my work be done as unto the Lord? Oh, that today my clothes may be vestments, my meals sacraments, my house a temple, my table an altar, my speech incense, and myself a priest! Lord, fulfill thy promise, and let nothing be to me common or unclean.

Let me in faith expect this. Believing it to be so, I shall be helped to make it so. As I myself am the property of Jesus, my Lord may take an inventory of all I have for it is altogether His own; and I resolve to prove it to be so by the use to which I put it this day. From morning till evening, I would order all things by a happy and holy rule. My bells shall ring: why should they not? Even my horses shall have bells: who has such a right to music as the saints have? But all my bells, my music, my mirth shall be turned to holiness and shall ring out the name of “The Happy God.”

C H Spurgeon

Sermon Notes Zechariah

Zechariah 4:10

Small Things not to be Despised

Sermon Notes

For who hath despised the day of small things? — Zechariah 4:10

GREAT numbers of persons do despise "the day of small things."

If they were wise, they would not do so; for it is not wise to despise anything, and to despise a thing because it is small is great folly.

A small thing may be greatly good, or terribly evil; and in neither case would it be prudent to despise it.

It is usually God's way to begin his great works with a day of small things

Thus it is seen that there is nothing in the means themselves.

Thus the divine power is more fully displayed.

Thus faith is exercised, and made to learn many lessons.

Why should men despise what God ordains?

Who are those persons who dare act thus contemptuously? They are not entitled to give themselves such airs: yet they dare to do so.

They show their contempt in various ways.

They affect pity for such feebleness (Neh. 4:2).

They decry, and find fault (1 Sam. 17:28).

They sneer, and ridicule (Matt. 8:5; Acts 17:18).

They leave alone, with silent neglect (Acts 5:8).

It is a sad pity when this contempt is poured upon a beginner in grace, for it may cause him sad distress and discouragement.

Our object at this time is to reprove those who despise the earlier and weaker works of grace in the soul. True it is "the day of small things;" but this is to be rejoiced in, and is not to be despised.

Let us commune with—

I. THOSE WHO DESPISE OTHERS WHO ARE IN THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

1. Do you not know that there are babes in grace, and that these are true children of God? Do you doubt that evident fact?
2. Were you not once such little ones yourselves? If you never were, who are you to despise your betters?
3. Were not the greatest of the saints once very feeble? Would you have acted thus to them?
4. May not the strong be glad at times to be as sure of salvation as these little ones? Why despise those whom you may yet envy?
5. Does not our Lord care tenderly for the lambs? (Isa. 40:11).
6. Has He not threatened all proud despisers? (Matt. 18:6).

Who then dares despise the day of small things?

Who are those who are so wicked? They are the proud, the ignorant, the thoughtless, the unfeeling, the profane, and such like.

II. THOSE WHO DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS IN THEMSELVES.

- I. They will frequently fail to notice and nurture thoughts and feelings which would lead them to Christ.
2. They cannot believe that salvation can come by ordinary means, or through their present knowledge and emotions: these are too small in their esteem, they crave for signs and wonders.
3. Therefore they endeavor to kill their own thoughtfulness at its birth, and quench the spark of desire before it can become a flame. Yet these despised things might have led on to salvation.
4. If they would nurture their weak desires, and feeble resolves, and faint beliefs, and trembling hopes, good would come of them.

5. No doubt many think ill of their own condition when God thinks well of them. They judge that little faith, and little life, and little strength are useless; but the Lord thinks not so.

It is wise to look away, both from small things and great things, to Jesus. Let us see his day, and be glad (John 8:56).

Let us trust in his finished work, and rejoice in his continued work. "Rejoice, and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel" (see context).

III. THOSE WHO DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

1. Hopeful pastors. We are looking out for gracious signs, and are more apt to be misled by our sanguine hopes than to fall into the opposite fault of despising the day of small things.

2. Anxious parents. They long to see buds of grace in their children. The smallest signs of spiritual life would charm them.

3. Wise soul-winners. They rejoice to see "first the blade."

4. Jesus himself. He loves the little ones (Mark 10:14).

Come ye to him, all ye trembling souls!

Multum in Parvo

When the boy began to draw portraits upon his slate, and to sketch with charcoal, the great artist was in him in embryo. It was not every eye that could perceive his budding genius, but he who did so, and encouraged the youth to pursue art as his vocation, found a life-long satisfaction in having helped him. Had he sneered at the young draughtsman, he would have lived to see his folly; but now he takes pleasure in every triumph of the renowned painter. Some such joy, only of a higher and more spiritual order, will be yours if you stimulate early piety, and teach the tender heart the way to peace and holiness. To repress desires which are heavenward, because they are attended with something of childishness, is wicked cruelty: prune the vine of its wild shoots, but do not uproot it. Foster and nurture even the tiniest sign of grace. Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it" (Isa. 65:8).

FEEBLEMIND. — I do not yet know all the truth; I am a very ignorant Christian man; sometimes, if I hear some rejoice in the Lord, it troubles me because I cannot do so too. It is with me as it is with a weak man among the strong, or as with a sick man among the healthy, or as a lamp despised." He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease" (Job. 7:5). So that I know not what to do.

GREATHEART. — But, brother, I have it in commission to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak. You must needs go along with us; we will wait for you, we will lend you our help, we will deny ourselves of some things, both opinionative and practical, for your sake; we will not enter into doubtful disputations before you, we will be made all things to you rather than you shall be left behind (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8; 4:22). — Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"

One afternoon, I noticed a young lady at the service, whom I knew to be a Sunday School teacher. After the service, I asked her where her class was. "Oh," said she, "I went to the school, and found only a little boy, and so I came away." "Only a little boy!" said I; "Think of the value of one such soul! The fires of a Reformation may be slumbering in that tow-headed boy; there may be a young Knox, or a Wesley, or a Whitefield in your class." — D. L. Moody

The little lichen imperceptibly deposits the first layer of soil upon barren rocks in mid-ocean, from which grow up all the luxuriant wealth and beauty of the spice-island. Ferns have seeds so extremely diminutive that for a long time it was doubted if they existed at all. Yet such a seed, altogether invisible to the naked eye, floats on long journeys through the air, and falls on some lichen-covered island, where it immediately fructifies, and covers the place with vegetation.

The moss is but a very little plant, yet when its seeds fall on deep, swampy, treacherous morasses, they grow up, and bind the ground together with such bands that it becomes quite safe to pass over — building, in fact, a broad and durable bridge. "Throughout creation the grandest and most complicated ends are obtained by the employment of the simplest means;" — James Nell, in "Rays from the Realms of Nature"

Zechariah 7:5-6

Self or God?

Sermon Notes

Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?— Zechariah 7:5-6

THE acceptableness of religious duties must not be taken for granted. We should ask searching questions about them, for the Lord himself does so. It behooves hearers to be very attentive to close personal inquiries as to their holy things.

During long years, "even those seventy years," pious observances may have been kept up, and yet there may have been no virtue in them.

This fact makes it wise for us all to question ourselves, for we may have been habitual religionists, and yet may also never have done any thing as "unto the Lord;"

Two reflections rise before our mind:

I. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES SHOULD BE UNTO THE LORD. "Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"

1. They should be attended to out of respect to his command. Ceremonies which are not of his ordaining are mere will-worship. We partake of ordinances, not because of custom, or church rule, but "unto the Lord" (Rom. 14:6).

2. They should be carried out with a dependence upon God's grace to make them useful to us, for outward forms are nothing of themselves. Unless the Spirit of God apply them to us, they are empty buckets drawn up from a dry well (John 6:63).

3. They should be fulfilled with such an eye to God as their nature and meaning suggest: as for instance, in fasting there should be sorrow towards God for having grieved him; and in holy feasting the joy must not be carnal, but "joy in the Lord."

4. They should be accompanied with that spiritual understanding without which they are mere play-acting in the sight of God. There must be the true fasting, which is abstinence from sin; and the true feasting, which is the reception of Christ with joy.

5. They should be attended to with a view to glorifying God in them. For this end come we to baptism, communion, praise, etc.

If these things are not done unto the Lord, what are they but the rites of atheism? — or a sort of witchcraft, a repetition of incantations, genuflection, and the like? (Isa. 66:3).

II. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES MAY BE UNTO OURSELVES. "Did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

They are so most clearly—

1. When the spiritual element is absent. Then even in the Sacred Supper there is nothing more than mere eating and drinking, as in the case of the Corinthian church. How generally have religious festivals become mere excuses for banqueting!

2. When the ordinance is attended to because it brings personal credit. Motives of custom, respectability, or dignity, may lead men even to the table of the Lord. This is eating for ourselves.

3. When the outward observance is used as a means of pacifying the conscience, and taken as a spiritual opiate. Without drawing near to God, the man feels easier because he has performed a bit of pious ritual. This is eating and drinking for ourselves.

4. When outward ritual is practiced in the hope that we shall be saved thereby. The motive is religious selfishness, and the act must be unacceptable.

5. When there is no intent to please God therein: for as the intent is, such is the act; and when there is no intent toward God, the whole matter falls short of acceptance with God.

See how vain are the religious performances of unbelievers. Read verses 1 to 3 of this chapter.

Let us come to Jesus, who is the sum and substance of all fasts, and feasts, and all else of right observance.

Let us live as unto the Lord (Rom. 14:8).

Striking Paragraphs

If, after thou hast heard so many masses, matins, and even-songs, and hast received holy bread and holy water, and the bishop's blessing, or the cardinal's, or the pope's, thou wilt be more kind to thy neighbor, and love him better, and be more obedient to thy superiors, more merciful and ready to forgive; if thou dost more despise the world, and art more athirst for spiritual things, then do such things increase grace. If not, they are a lie. — Tyndale

A certain king would build a cathedral, and, that the credit of it might be all his own, he forbade anyone to contribute to its erection in the least degree. A tablet was placed in the side of the building, and on it his name was carved as the builder. But one night he saw in a dream an angel, who came down, and erased his name; and the name of a poor widow apt peered in its stead. This was three

times repeated, when the enraged king summoned the woman before him, and demanded, "What have you been doing, and why have you broken my commandment?" The trembling widow replied, "I loved the Lord, and longed to do something for his name, and for the building up of his church. I was forbidden to touch it in any way, so in my poverty I brought a wisp of hay for the horses that drew the stones." Then the king saw that he had labored for his own glory, but the widow for the glory of God, and he commanded that her name should be inscribed upon the tablet. — Cyclopaedia of Illustrative Anecdotes

In no part of the great universe is any being fervently devout by accident. Everywhere, even in heaven, creatures are devout from purpose, design, endeavor. Eminently is this true on earth; no man ever happened to be religious. — Dr. Stoughton, in "Lights of the World"

A story which needs careful telling, and then may be most useful: There is an Eastern story of a Sultan who overslept himself, so as not to awaken at the hour of prayer. So the devil came, and waked him, and told him to get up and pray. "Who are you?" said the Sultan. "Oh, no matter!" replied the other; "my act is good, is it not? No matter who does the good action, so long as it is good." "Yes," replied the Sultan, "but I think you are Satan. I know your face; you have some bad motive." "But," said the other, "I am not so bad as I am painted. I was an angel once, and still keep some of my original goodness." "That's all very well," replied the sagacious and prudent Caliph, "but you are the tempter: that's your business; and I wish to know why you want me to get up and pray." "Well," said the devil, with a flirt of impatience, "if you must know, I will tell you. If you had slept and forgotten your prayers, you would have been sorry for it afterwards, and penitent; but if you go on as now, and do not neglect a single prayer for ten years, you will be so satisfied with yourself that it will be worse for you than if you had missed one sometimes, and repented of it. God loves your fault mixed with penitence more than your virtue seasoned with pride."

What is all righteousness that men devise, What — but a sordid bargain for the skies? But Christ as soon would abdicate his own, As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne. — Cowper

Zechariah 9:11, 12

Prisoners of Hope

Sermon Notes

As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee. — Zechariah 9:11-12

LET US commence our meditation with the description of our Lord which is given us in verses 9 and 10.

Here we see his kingdom, his character, his power to save, his lowliness, the weapons of his conquest: "speak peace unto the heathen"; and the ultimate extent of his dominion: "to the ends of the earth?"

Because of him, and through him, there is mercy for the oppressed and troubled ones in Zion: "as for thee also" (verse 11).

This is a wonderful text for those who are in the lowest possible state of mind. May the Lord make it a blessing to them!

Our subjects of thought shall be:

I. CONDITION OF THE SORROWING ONES. "Prisoners in the pit wherein is no water.

They are described as—

1. Prisoners: bound, freedom gone, unable to do as they would, in the power of another, miserable.
2. Prisoners in a pit: escape impossible, darkness intolerable, fate unavoidable, present discomfort terrible.
3. Prisoners in a pit wherein is no water: comfortless, and likely to perish of thirst. They find no comfort in sin, nor indeed in anything else. They are, however, though less comfortable, all the less likely to be drowned when there is no water. Comfort in sin is deadly: the absence of that comfort is hopeful.

Thus are many oppressed souls helplessly in the power of despair till the Lord comes to rescue them.

II. CAUSE OF THEIR DELIVERANCE "I have sent forth thy prisoners?"

1. The Lord Omniscient spies them out in their dungeon, and he knows whose prisoners they are.
2. He has the power and the right to set free prisoners. Who can shut up those whom he delivers?
3. He sends them forth from the pit. He grants life, light, and liberty to them. Their feet are free, and they are on free soil.

4. He sends them forth by "the blood." By the expiation made for sin before God. By the peace created in the conscience of the penitent.

5. He sends them forth by what is called "the blood of thy covenant" — the covenant made between Zion and her King.

Let a soul once know the blessedness of "the covenant;" and the sealing power of "the blood;" and it is a prisoner no longer.

III. COURSE COMMENDED TO THE DELIVERED ONES. "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope."

They are out of the pit of despair, but not "out of the wood" of trouble: they have hope of salvation, but they need salvation itself.

It will be their wisdom—

1. To make hope their characteristic. When they feel like prisoners, let them hope, and so become "prisoners of hope."

2. To make Christ their Stronghold.

3. To turn to him every day, and all the day.

4. To turn to him specially when they feel like prisoners.

When a man is freed from death and despair, he is still to come to Jesus more and more. "To whom coming," etc. (1 Pet. 2:4).

IV. COMFORT GIVEN TO THOSE WHO TURN TO THE STRONGHOLD. "Even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

1. God is speedy in his comforts to those who turn to Jesus. "Even today do I declare."

2. God is abundant in his mercy: "I will render double unto thee."

The double of your trouble (Job 13:10).

The double of your expectation (Isa. 67:7).

The double of your attainments: "grace for grace" (John 1:16).

The double of your largest faith (Eph. 3:20).

3. God is consoling in his promise; for it is—

Plain: "I declare."

Present: "Even today do I declare."

Positive: "I declare that I will."

Personal: "I will render unto thee."

Let us glorify the Lord for lifting us out of the pit.

Let us glorify the Lord Jesus for being our Stronghold.

Let us glorify the Lord for that double portion which he allots us.

Free Thoughts

Here God the Father speaks to Christ with relation to some covenant between them both; and what covenant can that be but the covenant of redemption? All the temporal, spiritual, and eternal deliverances which we enjoy, they swim to us through the blood of that covenant that is passed between the Father and the Son. By virtue of the same blood of the covenant, wherewith we are reconciled, justified, and saved, were the Jews delivered from their Babylonish captivity. The Babylonish captivity, thralldom, and dispersion, was that waterless pit, that dirty dungeon, that uncomfortable and forlorn condition, out of which they were delivered by virtue of the blood of the covenant; that is by virtue of the blood of Christ, figured by the blood that was sprinkled upon the people, and by virtue of the covenant confirmed thereby (Exod. 24:8; Ps. 74:20; Heb. 13:20). Look, as all the choice mercies, the high favors, the noble blessings, that the saints enjoy, are purchased by the blood of Christ; so they are made sure to the saints by the same blood; "by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners." Whatever desperate distresses, and deadly dangers, the people of God may fall into, yet they are "prisoners of hope," and may look for deliverance by the blood of the covenant. — Thomas

With what gratitude and joy should these intimations of hope be received by those who are naturally in so miserable a condition ! It is a celebrated story that, when Titus Flamininus, at the public games, proclaimed the liberty of Greece, after it had been conquered by the Romans, the auditors were at first lost in a silent amazement, and then burst out into one continued shout for two hours together, "Liberty! Liberty!" Methinks such joy, and greater than this, should appear amongst miserable sinners when these proclamations for liberty are made. And are they not now made? Have I not been telling you, from the Word of God, that though you were condemned under the righteous sentence of the law, through a Redeemer that sentence may be reversed, your souls may be restored to life and happiness? Have I not been proving that, though Satan held you in a dark captivity, yet by the law of the great Redeemer you may be rescued from his hands, and made more than conquerors through him? Have I not told you that, notwithstanding the painful and the fruitless struggle which you have hitherto had with the feebleness and corruptions of a depraved nature, you may still receive those communications of the Spirit which will purify and strengthen you, and enable you to perfect holiness in the fear of God?... Prisoners of hope, will you despair? — Dr. Doddridge (sermon on this text)

Zechariah 10:6

Perfect Restoration

Sermon Notes

I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. — Zechariah 10:6

THE manner in which hope can come to sinners: "I have mercy upon them." Mercy abides in the heart of God even after the hope of it has left the human bosom.

The token that God's mercy is coming, and that it is indeed come, is prayer. "Behold he prayeth" is the sure indication of coming deliverance (Acts 9:11).

God had observed prayer in them, for he said, "I will hear them."

The result of mercy's coming is exceedingly delightful: "They shall be as though I had not cast them off."

This promise may be applied:

I. IN GENERAL, TO ALL PENITENT SINNERS.

God's mercy in many ways restores men to their lost position: and in some senses even to their pristine condition before the fall.

1. The forgiveness of sin, and justification by faith, make them as acceptable as if they had never transgressed.
2. The renovation of nature, by the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, creates in them as pure an inner life as Adam ever had.
3. Restoration to paradise. Even now we dwell with God in a blessed state, for the Lord hath raised us to the heavenlies in Christ.
4. Redemption from the curse. The curse is clean gone forever, through him who was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) The anger of God is removed from us forever.
5. Engagement in service. We are honorably employed, and could not have been more so had we never sinned.
6. Communion with God. This we enjoy as truly as unfallen humanity could have done. Indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in the regenerate, and this is not said of Adam.
7. Eternal life. We are preserved from penal death. As Jesus lives so must we (John 14:19). There is no fear that we shall eat and die, for the Lord has given us eternal life, and we shall never perish (John 10:28).

The further working out of the likeness between the state of the saved and that of Adam in the garden, may be made highly instructive.

II. IN PARTICULAR, TO PENITENT BACKSLIDERS. Only return unto God, and live in his fear, and you shall enjoy all the blessedness of your best spiritual state.

You shall again enjoy—

1. The complete removal of your guilt, and shall have no more consciousness of sin; thus shall you return to rest of soul.

2. Renewed joy, as in the days of your first love.
3. Restored purity of heart, as in the times before you wandered.
4. Fresh communion with God, and guidance from his Holy Spirit. Is not this your cry, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me?" (Ps. 51:11)
5. New usefulness. You shall teach transgressors the pardoning ways of Jehovah (Ps. 51:13).
6. Restoration to the church, from which you may have been excluded. Your brethren will rejoice over you, and so will your God.
7. Future upholding. You shall watch against temptation all the more earnestly, and so you shall stand the more firmly through grace. God can make use of your unhappy fall to teach you many precious lessons.

Suppose this invitation to turn unto the Lord should be refused—

It will be a wanton rejection of generous love.

There can never be a fairer offer.

This will increase the uneasiness of a guilty conscience.

This will lead to the fear that the refuser is not one of the Lord's chosen.

But we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak. We are jealous lest you miss the day of grace.

At once confess your sin, and humbly plead the word of the Lord, "I have mercy upon them."

Then cry out in prayer, for it is written, "I will hear them."

Then, in faith in the name of Jesus, hang upon the promise, "They shall be as though I had not cast them off."

By the mercy of God, we entreat you to seek his face at once, with true heart, and resolute importunity.

Selections

The fall is a greater mystery than the Redemption. He who has had experience of the one may well accept the revelation of the other. — C. Vaughan

Now thou hast avenged
Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
Temptation, hast regain'd lost Paradise,
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent.
He never more henceforth will dare set foot
In Paradise to tempt; his snares are broke:
For, though that seat of earthly bliss be fail'd,
A fairer Paradise is founded now
For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou,
A Savior, art come down to reinstall,
Where they shall dwell secure, when time shall be,
Of Tempter and temptation without fear.— Milton

The end of the gospel is life and perfection It is to make us partakers of the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness ... God himself cannot make me happy, if he be only without me; unless he give me a participation of himself and his own likeness unto my soul. — Cudworth

He raised me from the deeps of sin,
The gates of gaping hell,
And fixed my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell.— Watts

A man upon the way, having accidentally lost his purse, is questioned by his fellow-traveler where he had it last. "Oh!" says he, "I am confident that I drew it out of my pocket when I was in such a town, at such an inn: "Why, then!" says the other, "there is no better

way to have it again than by going back to the place where you last had it." This is the case of many a man in these loose, unsettled times; they have lost their love to Christ, and his truth, since their corn and wine and oil have increased; since outward things are in abundance added unto them they have slighted the light of God's countenance. When they were poor and naked of all worldly comfort, then they sought God's face both early and late, and nothing was more dear and precious unto them than the truth of Christ. What, then, is to be done to recover this lost love to Christ? Back again, back again directly where you last had it! Back to the sign of the broken and contrite heart! There it was that you drew it out into good words and better works; and though it be since lost in the crowd of worldly employments, there and nowhere else, you shall be sure to find it again. — Spencer's "Things New and Old"

Zechariah 10:12

Spiritual Convalescence

And I will strengthen them in them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord. — Zechariah 10:12

ENLARGE upon the reference of the text and of the whole chapter to the Lord's ancient people, the Jews.

They are so much forgotten, and so often persecuted, and so generally despised, that we do well to think upon the prophecies of a glorious future, which the Lord God has spoken concerning them.

But the heritage of the natural and typical Israel belongs, in its spiritual meaning, to the spiritual Israel; and this promise is ours.

To those who lament their weakness the promise of the text is peculiarly cheering.

I. DIVINE STRENGTHENING PROMISED. "I will strengthen them in the Lord."

1. It is painfully needed. We are naturally weak as water.

After soul-sickness we are sadly feeble.

In the presence of great labors we feel our weakness.

We want strength for watching, walking, working, and warring.

2. It is freely promised. See also verse 6.

Justice might have left us to ourselves.

Tender love observes our need.

Infinite power abundantly supplies it.

3. It is divinely bestowed: "I will strengthen them." Hence it is—

Certain in accomplishment.

Honorable in reception. How ennobling to receive strength immediately from the Lord Jehovah!

Unlimited in communication, if we have but faith to receive it.

4. It is gradually received. We go from strength to strength.

By use of the means of grace: prayer, communion with God, spiritual exercise, experience, etc.

By the silent operations of the Holy Ghost.

By the growth of each holy grace, and the increase of life within.

5. It is delightfully perceived.

An excellent illustration is that of a sick man recovering strength. As in his case, so in ours:

Appetite returns: we relish the Word.

Difficulties vanish: burdens grow light, etc.

Employment is desired: strength pines for exercise.

Expansive views are obtained. We walk abroad with delight, and leave the narrow chamber in which a sickly soul is shut up.

Pleasure is enjoyed, and gratitude is excited.

6. It is sufficiently continued.

God continues to strengthen us day by day.

He increases our strength as it is required.

He makes his strength more and more apparent in our weakness, till we know no power but his.

II. CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY PREDICTED. "They shall walk up and down in his name."

1. They shall enjoy ease — implied in walking up and down.
2. They shall possess freedom: it is the gait of liberty.
3. They shall be active for the Lord, in varied forms of service.
4. They shall persevere in such activity, walking up and down; and evermore crying joyously, "Onward and Upward?"
5. They shall consecrate that activity with care: "they shall walk in his name" — doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Sick souls shall exhibit the activities of convalescence when the Lord imparts strength to them. Those who are recovering from sickness know how happy such a condition usually is.

III. BOTH BLESSINGS GUARANTEED.

1. Here is the divine "I will" of omnipotent grace.
2. Here is the divine "they shall" of consecrated free-agency.
3. Here is the divine "saith the Lord" of infallible faithfulness. All these united make our text a glorious one.

Are you sick, sorry, weak? This sacred text is for you.

See where your strength lieth! Look to the Strong for strength.

Believe in Jesus to obtain it! He is ready to bestow it.

When you have it — use it abundantly! Help the weak, bear the burdens of others, serve the Lord with gladness, and glorify God.

Words of a Great Preacher

Sir Walter Scott relates in his autobiography that, when he was a child, one of his legs was paralyzed, and when medical skill failed, a kind uncle induced him to exert the muscles of the powerless limb by drawing a gold watch before him on the floor, tempting him to creep after it, and thus keeping up and gradually increasing vital action and muscular force. So God deals with us in our spiritual childhood, and the weakness of our faith. How weak our efforts; how slow our movements! But spiritual vitality is elicited, developed, strengthened by those efforts and movements, slow and weak as they are.

Every man needs strength. We ask for daily bread: and we ask for it as a means of renewing our strength. We have as much need to ask for strength, as for deliverance from evil, and for the forgiveness of our trespasses. There are certain things to be done, certain things to be endured, and things to be resisted, which can be performed, and borne, and stood against, only by power of a certain kind, and by that power in a certain degree. Nor is strength needful merely for doing and for suffering. It is also necessary for enjoyment. Weakness is so much less of life. The feeble live but in a low degree.

Lack of strength is more serious than lack of any kind of outward possession. A weak rich man is in a far worse position than a strong poor man; and the strong poor man is really the wealthier. Weakness lessens work, reduces enjoyment, and greatly aggravates suffering of any kind. In many instances, moreover, it is the cause of wickedness — leading directly to transgression, and exposing the individual to fierce and exceedingly dangerous temptations. So that, as a means of preserving ourselves against sin, we should ask daily for strength.

Every man needs strength; but no man has within him strength equal to the demands that are made upon him. He requires strengthening.

The Christian is no exception to this rule. He needs strength. His conversion was not translation to inactivity, to ease, and to unbroken quiet. His work is not the ceaseless singing of psalms while he reclines upon green pastures, and sits beside still waters.

There are times when he lies down in green pastures; but he lies down wearied; and he lies down that he may rise again a stronger man, to enter upon fiercer battles, and to do harder work. We rest, not for resting's sake, but that we may work again.

Brethren, a Christian's strength can come only by his being strengthened. There is not within the man, as a man, nor within him as a Christian, any stock or store of strength given him at the commencement of his life. Day by day, stage after stage, first as a babe, then as a young man, and then as a father in Christ, does the man need strengthening. And what a glorious thing it is that, instead of our resources being given to us at the beginning of our Christian life, they are supplied to us as we need them. Does not this arrangement keep us in close communion with the Father of our spirits, and with the Source of all energy and wisdom? So that the very application to God, apart from the things which application always secures, tends to strengthen you. — Samuel Martin

Zechariah 12:10

Mourning at the Cross

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. — Zechariah 12:10

NOTE the remarkable change of persons: "look upon me" and "mourn for him." Such changes indicate unity and distinctness; and afford us a hint as to the Unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of the Persons.

He who speaks is Jehovah, "which stretcheth forth the heavens" (see verse 1), and yet he says "me, whom they have pierced."

It is Jehovah-Jesus who is pierced, and pours out the Spirit of grace.

It is a marvel that Jesus should be crucified when the Jewish law required stoning; and that, when crucified, the Roman soldier, though ignorant of the prophecy, should pierce him with his spear.

The conversion of the Jews is here promised: they will be converted to a crucified Christ.

They, by their unbelief and hatred, were guilty of his death: let us pray that they may be saved by it right speedily.

Our text reveals their way of repentance, and this must also be ours. Evangelical sorrow for sin is to be our subject at this time. We shall remark that:

I. IT IS CREATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."

1. It is not produced by mere conscience, nor by terror, nor by the use of a form of penitence; muchless by music, pictures, etc.
2. It comes as a gift of grace: "I will pour:" The understanding is enlightened, the heart renewed, etc., by a distinct act of the Spirit of God, sent forth by the Father.
3. It is attended by prayer: "grace and of supplications:" In this differing from remorse, which never prays.
4. It is continuous, for it comes with abiding things, such as the fountain opened (see next chapter); and it flows from an abiding source, for the Spirit of grace and of supplications abides in the saints.

II. IT IS CAUSED BY LOOKING TO JESUS

"They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced."

It cannot, therefore, prepare for that look: we look to Jesus as we are, and the look makes penitents of us.

1. We see the horrible hatred which sin bears toward purity, for it slew the Holy One, and that when he was arrayed in the most lovely and attractive form.
2. We see its ingratitude to love. Sin repays infinite compassion with inveterate hate, and therefore crucifies Jesus.
3. We see its abhorrence of God. It would slay him if it could, and it did so in effect. Sin is Deicidal in intent and tendency.
4. We see that such is the terrible guilt of our sin that nothing but an infinite sacrifice could atone for it.
5. We see that we have entered into the sin of Calvary by our conduct towards the Lord Jesus in our rejecting and resisting him and

his cause! We have repeated the crime of the cross.

III. IT IS THE CHIEF OF SORROWS.

"They shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son."

1. Comparable to a terrible parental agony, for an only son, or for a first-born child: both very special sources of grief.
2. Comparable also to the national mourning for Josiah (see verse 11). Never nation sustained greater loss than Judah when it lost Josiah, and the people showed it by the national lamentation. Such is a penitent's sorrow at the death of Jesus.
3. It is personal and private (see verses 12-14).
4. It is spreading and social. "The land shall mourn" (verse 13).

IV. IT IS NOT IN ITSELF THE CLEANSING FOR SIN.

By it we confess the crime, but cannot thereby remove it. Conviction is a glass to show our spots, not a bath to cleanse them.

1. It acknowledges our need of the fountain; but it is not itself a fountain of cleansing.
2. It goes with the saving look to Jesus, but it is no rival to it.
3. It leads away from self, and even from its own self.
4. It leads to Jesus: we mourn for him; and this linking us with Jesus is most operative upon our hearts.

Come, bleeding heart, and look to Jesus for healing!

Come, hard heart, and look to Jesus for brokenness!

Come, careless heart, for the sight of Jesus may arrest even thee!

Zechariah 12:10

The Bitterness of the Cross

For variety, we add a second outline on the same text.

They shall be in bitterness for him. — Zechariah 12:10

WHEN the Jews receive Jesus as Messiah, they shall look upon him as pierced and slain: and the first result will be bitter repentance. It is the same with us. Of all sights, a sight of Jesus crucified is the sweetest; but at the same time it causes bitterness.

I. OUR FIRST SIGHT OF CHRIST BRINGS BITTERNESS.

1. For not having known his preciousness before. What a loss!
2. For having slighted such love so long. What crime upon crime!
3. From fear lest he should not be ours after all. This causes a bitter pang, an anxious grief of soul.
4. Sin, its greatness, and its effects, are seen in his cruel death; and this makes us deplore our guilt, and his woes.
5. The wrath of God, its justice and terribleness, are also seen at the cross, and we tremble.
6. Dread of never being forgiven, and a sense that we can never forgive ourselves, are mingled in one bitter draught.

II. OUR CONTINUED SIGHT OF CHRIST WORKS IN US THROUGHOUT LIFE A MEASURE OF THE SAME BITTERNESS.

1. His great love, when better known, brings deeper grief for sin.
2. It inspires a direr dread of grieving him.
3. It creates a deeper regret for our present unworthiness.
4. It inspires a greater horror at man's rejection of him, while we see thousands around us perishing by that madness.
5. It promotes a more overwhelming sympathy with Jesus in his striving against the evil which he died to destroy.

III. THIS BITTERNESS HAS MOST GRACIOUS EFFECTS.

1. It works great hatred of sin, and a tender and careful avoiding of it.
2. It makes Christ very sweet.
3. It makes worldly joys and temptations tasteless.
4. It removes the bitterness of affliction, pain, and death.
5. It prevents the sinful bitterness of anger, etc., at persecution.
6. It has an unutterable sweetness in it. We come to relish repentance, and to feel a pleasure in lowly grief for Jesus.

Nails

I see the crowd in Pilate's hall, I mark their wrathful mien;
Their shouts of "Crucify!" appal, with blasphemy between,
And of that shouting multitude I feel that I am one;
And in that din of voices rude, I recognize my own.

I see the scourges tear his back I see the piercing crown,
And of that crowd who smite and mock I feel that I am one;
Around yon cross, the throng I see, mocking the Sufferer's groan,
Yet still my voice it seems to be — as if I mocked alone.

'Twas I that shed the sacred blood, I nailed him to the tree,
I crucified the Christ of God, I joined the mockery;
Yet not the less that blood avails to cleanse away my sin,
And not the less that cross prevails to give me peace within.

We must nail our sins to the cross of Christ, fasten them upon the tree on which he suffered. Sin will begin to die within a man upon the sight of Christ on the cross, for the cross of Christ accuses sin, shames sin, and by a secret virtue destroys the very heart of sin. We must use sin as Christ was used when he was made sin for us; we must lift it up, and make it naked by confession of it to God; we must fasten the hands and feet of it by repentance, and pierce the heart of it by godly sorrow. — Byfield

Now, to make and keep the heart soft and tender, the consideration of Christ's dolorous passion must needs be of singular use and efficacy; as the sight of Caesar's bloody robes greatly affected the people of Rome, "and edged them on to revenge his death. — Trapp

I am no preacher, let this hint suffice —

The cross once seen is death to every vice;

Else he that hung there suffered all his pain,

Bled, groan'd, and agonized, and died, in vain.— Cowper

Newton's hymn, "In evil long I took delight;" describes the experience of one who was brought to repentance and salvation by the sight of Christ crucified.

It is a sweet saying of one of old, "Let a man grieve for his sin, and then joy for his grief." — Thomas Brooks

Zechariah 12:12-14

Apart

And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their

wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. — Zechariah 12:12-14

TRUE repentance is attended with mourning. It may not in itself be sorrow, but a repentance which did not include sorrow for sin would be a mere presence. It is a change of mind, and that change involves sorrow for the past.

We have need to stand in doubt of that repentance which hath no tear in its eye, no mourning in its heart.

Even when Christ is clearly seen, and pardon is enjoyed, mourning for sin does not cease; say rather, it is both deepened and purified.

This mourning has one special characteristic that it is personal, the act of each individual, and the act of the individual apart from any of his fellows. Its watchword is "apart."

I. THE INDIVIDUALIZING EFFECT OF SORROW FOR SIN.

Observe the man, times in which we here have the word "apart."

1. It is seen even when that mourning is universal.

"The land shall mourn, every family apart." The widest spread of grace will not diminish its power over each separate person.

2. It will be seen in the separation of one family from another when the mourning is common, and most families repent. How much more when only a few households worship God!

3. It is seen in the distinction between family and family even when both fear the Lord. Each family has its peculiar sin, and a speciality must be made in the confession of each one.

The royal family: or rich: influential: "the family of the house of David apart."

The prophet's family: the family at the manse: "the family of the house of Nathan apart."

The priest's family: the family of the church-officer, or the teacher, etc.: "the family of the house of Levi apart."

The ordinary family: the household of the trader, workman, etc.: "the family of Shimei apart."

Each family has its neglected duties, evil habits, differences, unconverted members, besetments, etc.

4. It is seen in the individualizing of those nearest akin:

"and their wives apart." These are one flesh; but when their hearts are made flesh, each one mourns alone.

Common sin in husbands and wives should be mourned in common; holy joy, and holy grief, and much of devotion should be united; but in seeking the Lord by repentance each one must come alone.

This personality of holy grief has been stigmatized as morbid, self-conscious, and selfish; but those who thus speak are strangers to spiritual facts, and cavil for the mere sake of caviling.

II. HOW DOES THIS INDIVIDUALITY SHOW ITSELF?

Of course, from the nature of things, it differs in each case, but—

1. Each individual sees most his own sin: he is alone as to character.

2. Each individual desires to be alone as to place. No matter where, whether at the bedside, or in the field, or in the barn: but solitude is desired, and must be obtained.

3. Each individual has his own time. At once the penitent must mourn, whether it be morning, noon, or night: he cannot be timed by regulation.

4. Each individual has his own manner. Some are silent; others cry aloud. One weeps, another cannot literally do so, and is all the more sad. One feels broken in heart, another laments his hardness, etc.

5. Each individual has his own secret. None can enter into it even if they would do so. Each mourner has a secret hidden away in his own soul, and he cannot reveal it to men.

III. HOW DO WE ACCOUNT FOR THIS INDIVIDUALITY?

1. In part it is accounted for by a natural and justifiable shame, which prevents our confessing all our sins before another.

2. The heart desires to come to God himself, and the presence of a third person would be an interruption.
3. The man is conscious that his guilt was all his own, and as he disassociates everyone else from it, he instinctively comes to God apart, and solely on his own account.
4. This is the sign of sincerity. Sham piety talks about religion as, national, and delights to display itself in the assembly, or in the street; true godliness is of the heart, and being "in spirit and in truth," it is deeply personal.
5. This is the mark of spiritual life with its individual emotions, needs, struggles, desires, regrets, confessions, etc. No two living men are quite alike outwardly, and certainly none are so inwardly: therefore, before the Lord they must exhibit a separate personal existence.

Practice much self-examination; minute, and searching.

Realize the fact that you must die apart, and, in a sense, be judged, and sentenced apart. Never forget your own individuality. You must have Christ for yourself, and be born again yourself, or you are lost.

Go forth and bless all the world when you are yourself prepared for such work. Light your own torch, or you cannot enlighten others. There is no selfishness in seeking to be made unselfish, and that is what grace alone can do for you.

Personalities

Let the question of eternity have a monopoly in you. It is an intensely personal question; but instead of making you selfish, it will expand your heart. He who has never felt for his own soul cannot feel for another's. — Brownlow North

Personal private faults must be privately confessed. It is not meet a wife should know all the bosom-sins of him in whose bosom she lieth. Perchance being now offended for not hearing her husband's prayers, she would be more offended if she heard them. Nor hath she just cause to complain, seeing herein Nathan's wife is equal with Nathan himself; what liberty she alloweth is allowed her, and she may, as well as her husband, claim the privilege privately and apart, to pour forth her soul unto God in her daily devotions. Yet man and wife, at other times, ought to communicate in their prayers, all others excluded — Thomas Fuller

The question "Guilty?" or "Not Guilty?" must be put to each prisoner separately, and each one must answer to his name, and put in his personal plea. Should a pardon be granted, it must bear the individual's name, and it must be issued distinctly to him, or it will be a document of no value to him. In every case, the guilt and the pardon must have a personal bearing: but how hard it is to make a man see this! Oh, that we could preach in the "thou and thee" style, and could make each hearer feel that we were as personal as Nathan when he said, "Thou art the man!" If our hearers will not cry, "Lord, is it I?" we must go to them with the word, "I have a message from God unto thee."