

2 Corinthians Sermon Notes - Spurgeon

2 Cor. 1:3, 4—"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

The apostle began with invoking the blessing of God. Verse 1.

He then went on to bless God.

He was much tried, but he was in a grateful and cheerful humour, for he wrote of most comfortable things.

Here we have—

I. THE COMFORTABLE OCCUPATION. Blessing God. "Blessed be God."

If a man under affliction blesses the Lord—

1. It argues that his heart is not vanquished,

So as to gratify Satan by murmuring, or

So as to kill his own soul with despair.

2. It prophesies that God will send to him speedy deliverances to call forth new praises. It is natural to lend more to a man when the interest on what he has is duly paid.

Never did man bless God but sooner or later God blessed him.

3. It profits the believer above measure.

It takes the mind off from present trouble.

It lifts the heart to heavenly thoughts and considerations.

It gives a taste of heaven, for heaven largely consists in adoring and blessing God.

It destroys distress by bringing God upon the scene.

4. It is the Lord's due in whatsoever state we may be.

II. THE COMFORTABLE TITLES.

1. A name of affinity, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. A name of gratitude, "The Father of mercies."

3. A name of hope, "The God of all comfort."

4. A name of discrimination, "Who comforteth us." The Lord has a special care for those who trust in him.

III. THE COMFORTABLE FACT. "The God of all comfort comforteth us in all our tribulation."

1. God personally condescends to comfort the saints.

2. God habitually does this. He has always been near to comfort us in all past time, never once leaving us alone.

3. God effectually does this. He has always been able to comfort us in all tribulation. No trial has baffled his skill.

4. God everlastingly does this, he will comfort us to the end, for he is "the God of all comfort," and he cannot change.

Should we not be always happy since God always comforts us?

IV. THE COMFORTABLE DESIGN. "That we may be able to comfort."

1. To make us comforters of others. The Lord aims at this: the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, trains us up to be comforters.

There is great need for this holy service in this sin-smitten world.

2. To make us comforters on a large scale. "To comfort them which are in any trouble." We are to be conversant with all kinds of grief, and ready to sympathize with all sufferers.

3. To make us experts in consolation—"able to comfort"; because of our own experience of divine comfort.

4. To make us willing and sympathetic, so that we may through personal experience instinctively care for the state of others.

Let us now unite in special thanksgiving to the God of all comfort.

Let us drink in comfort from the word of the Lord, and be ourselves happy in Christ Jesus.

Let us be on the watch to minister consolation to all tried ones.

COMFORTABLE WORDS

Music is sweetest near or over rivers, where the echo thereof is best rebounded by the water. Praise for pensiveness, thanks for tears, and blessing God over the floods of affliction, make the most melodious music in the ear of heaven.—Thomas Fuller.

Many an Alleluia

That rings through the Father's home,
Sobbed out its first rehearsal
In the shades of a darkened room.

When we try to comfort one another, let it be God's comfort that we give.—T. T. Lynch.

We have no more religion than what we have in times of trial.
Andrew Fuller.

Away over in India a poor native woman—like Naomi—“was left of her two sons.” She did not, perhaps, know enough to think about God at all in her grief; but she would take no comfort. To everything that could be said she had one answer: “I had but two, and they are both gone.”

Day after day she pined and fretted, going listlessly about, her life “empty” of all but a blank despair. One morning, as she wandered here and there among the people of the mission, one of them again remonstrated; but the poor thing gave her old reply: “I had but two, and they are both gone.” “Look,” said the worker, turning, and pointing towards a group near by, where a white lady of the mission stood directing some dusky natives; “Do you see her?” The woman looked, and saw a sweet, pale face; patient, gentle, glad, as clear as a sky washed blue with storms, but wearing that unmistakable look which tells that storms have been. “Yes,” she said, “I see her.” “Well,” said the other, “she has lost her sons, too!”

The poor native mother gazed for a minute, spell-bound; then she sprang towards her. “Oh, lady!” she cried, “did you have two sons? and are they both gone?”

And now the white mother on her part turned and looked. “Yes,” she said, “I had two.”

“And are they both gone?”

“Both.”

“But they were all I had,” cried the other, “and they are both gone!”

“And mine are both gone,” said the white lady, clasping the hands of her poor sister in sorrow. “But Jesus took them; and they are with Jesus, and Jesus is with me. And by-and-by I shall have them again.”

From that hour the native woman sat at her white sister's feet, followed her about, hung on her words, and from her would take comfort—“the comfort wherewith she herself was comforted of God.”—From “What Aileth Thee?”

He would put off a meditated journey, rather than leave a poor parishioner who required his services; and from his knowledge of human nature, he was able, and in a remarkable manner, to throw himself into the circumstances of those who needed his help. No sympathy was like his.—Chambers, on George Crabbe.

2 Cor. 1:10+—“Who delivered us from so great a death, and both deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.”

Grammarians have here a lesson in the tenses; and Christians may profitably join in the exercise.

We may consider the past, present, and future, each one by itself.

We may also view them in their relation to each other.

Our text points out the delivering mercy of God as at all times working out the safety of his people. The case of Paul did not stand alone: hence he uses the plural: “who delivered us”; “we trust.”

We shall take the words out of the apostle's mouth and apply them to our own cases.

I. THE TEXT SUGGESTS THREE TRAINS OF THOUGHT.

1. Memory tells of deliverances in the past—

From violent death. In Paul's case, “so great a death” may mean death by fierce mobs, or by the emperor.

From our death in sin: “So great a death” indeed.

From fierce despair when under conviction.

From total overthrow when tempted by Satan.

From faintness under daily tribulation.

From destruction by slander and the like.

The Lord has most graciously delivered us hitherto. Let us express our gratitude.

2. Observation calls attention to present deliverance.

By the good hand of the Lord, we are at this time preserved—

From unseen dangers to life.

From the subtle assaults of Satan.

From the rampant errors of the times.

From inbred sin and natural corruption.

From the sentence of death within, and from the greater danger of self-trust. See the preceding verse.
Our present standing is wholly due to the grace of God, and, trusting in that grace, we may indulge a happy confidence.

3. Expectation looks out of the window upon the future.

Faith rests alone in God, "in whom we trust," and through him she looks for future deliverance—

From all future common trials.

From coming losses and afflictions, and from sicknesses, which may be coming upon us.

From the infirmities and wants of age.

From the peculiar glooms of death.

This expectation makes us march on with cheerfulness.

II. THE TEXT SUPPLIES THREE LINES OF ARGUMENT.

That the Lord will preserve us to the end is most sure. We can say of him, "In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

1. From the Lord's beginning to deliver we argue that he will yet deliver, for

There was no reason in us for his beginning to love us. If his love arises out of his own nature it will continue.

He has obtained no fresh knowledge. He foreknew all our misbehaviours: hence there is no reason for casting us off.

The reason which moved him at first is operating now, and none better can be required.

2. From the Lord's continuing to deliver we argue that he will yet deliver; for

His deliverances have been so many;

They have displayed such wisdom and power;

They have come to us when we have been so unworthy;

They have continued in such an unbroken line;

That we feel sure he will never leave nor forsake us.

3. From the Lord himself—"In whom we trust": we argue that he will yet deliver; for

He is as loving and strong now as aforesaid.

He will be the same in the future.

His purpose never changes, and it is to his glory to complete what he has begun. Verily, "he will yet deliver us."

III. THE TEXT IS OPEN TO THREE INFERENCES.

1. We infer that we shall always be so in danger as to need to be delivered: wherefore we are not high-minded, but fear.

2. We infer our constant need of God's own interposition. He alone has met our case in the past, and he only can meet it in the future: wherefore we would ever abide near our Lord.

3. We infer that our whole life should be filled with the praise of God, who, for past, present, and future, is our Deliverer.

FOR THE TIMES

First, God hath a time, as for all things, so for our deliverance. Secondly, God's time is the best time. He is the best discerner of opportunities. Thirdly, this shall be when he hath wrought his work upon our souls, specially when he hath made us to trust in him. As here, when Paul had learned to trust in God, then he delivered him.

Richard Sibbes.

The Roman noblemen could give no greater proof of their confidence in their city and army, than when they bought the land on which their Carthaginian enemies were encamped around the city. And we can give no greater proof of our confidence in God, than by trusting him in the land which our enemies, darkness and sickness and trouble, seem to possess, and acting as if God were their master, and mightier than they all. This is but to act upon the truth.

There is an ante-war incident which illustrates the power for despair which lies in forgetfulness of God, and the hope which leaps up when God is fully believed in. A dark cloud hung over the interests of the African race in our land. There seemed no way of deliverance. Frederick Douglas, at a crowded meeting, depicted the terrible condition. Everything was against his people. One political party had gone down on its knees to slavery; the other proposed not to abolish it anywhere, but only to restrict it. The Supreme Court had given judgment against black men as such. He drew a picture of his race writhing under the lash of the overseer, and trampled upon by brutal and lascivious men. As he went on with his despairing words, a great horror of darkness seemed to settle down upon the audience. The orator even uttered the cry for blood. There was no other relief. And then he showed that there was no relief even in that. Everything, every influence, every event was gathering, not for good, but for evil, about the doomed race. It seemed as if they were fated to destruction. Just at the instant when the cloud was most heavy over the audience, there slowly rose, in the front seat, an old black woman. Her name, "Sojourner Truth." She had given it to herself. Far and wide she was known as an African prophetess. Every eye was on her. The orator paused. Reaching out towards him her long bony finger, as every eye followed her pointing, she cried out, "Frederick, is God dead?" It was a lightning-flash upon that darkness. The cloud began to break, and faith and hope and patience returned with the idea of a personal and ever-living God.

Sword and Trowel, 1887.

Who murmurs that in these dark days
His lot is cast?
God's hand within the shadow lays
The stones whereon his gates of praise
Shall rise at last.—J. G. Whittier.

2 Cor. 1:20+—"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

Paul had altered his mind about visiting Corinth.

He had done this from the best of reasons.

The prejudices of certain Corinthians made them misconstrue his conduct, and speak of him as one whose word was not to be relied on.

He asserted that he did not use lightness, and that his mind was not of the "yea and nay" order, even upon so small a matter as a journey to Corinth at a certain date.

This led him to say that his preaching "was not yea and nay."

This further brought out the declaration that the promises of God are not "yea and nay."

Thus a trivial circumstance and an ungenerous remark led to the utterance of a most precious truth. This has often been the case.

From these words let us be led carefully to consider—

I. THE DIGNITY OF THE PROMISES. They are "the promises of God."

1. They were each one made by him according to the purpose of his own will.
2. They are links between his decrees and his acts; being the voice of the decree, and the herald of the act.
3. They display the qualities of him who uttered them. They are true, immutable, powerful, eternal, etc.
4. They remain in union with God. After the lapse of ages, they are still his promises as much as when he first uttered them.

5. They are guaranteed by the character of God who spoke them.

6. They will glorify him as he works out their fulfilment.

II. THE RANGE OF THE PROMISES: "All the promises."

It will be instructive to note the breadth of the promises by observing that—

1. They are found both in the Old and New Testaments; from Genesis to Revelation, running through centuries of time.
2. They are of both sorts—conditional and unconditional: promises to certain works, and promises of an absolute order.
3. They are of all kinds of things—bodily and spiritual, personal and general, eternal and temporal.
4. They contain blessings to varied characters, such as—

The Penitent: Lev. 26:40–42; Isa. 55:7, 57:15; Jer. 3:12, 13.

The Believing: John 3:16, 18, 6:47; Acts 16:31; 1 Pet. 2:6.

The Serving: Ps. 37:3, 9:10; Prov. 3:9, 10; Acts 10:35.

The Praying: Isa. 45:11; Lam. 3:25; Matt. 6:6; Ps. 145:18.

The Obeying: Ex. 19:5; Ps. 119:1–3; Isa. 1:19.

The Suffering: Matt. 5:10–12; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:12–14.

5. They bring us the richest boons: pardon, justification, sanctification, instruction, preservation, etc.

What a marvellous wealth lies in promises—"all the promises"!

III. THE STABILITY OF THE PROMISES: "All the promises in him are yea, and in him Amen."

A Greek word "Yea," and a Hebrew word "Amen," are used to mark certainty, both to Gentile and Jew.

1. They are established beyond all doubt as being assuredly the mind and purpose of the eternal God.
2. They are confirmed beyond all alteration. The Lord hath said "Amen," and so must it be for ever.
3. Their stability is in Christ Jesus beyond all hazard; for he is—

The witness of the promise of God,

The surety of the covenant,

The sum and substance of all the promises,

The fulfilment of the promises, by his actual incarnation, his atoning death, his living plea, his ascension power, etc.

The security and guarantee of the promises, since all power is in his hand to fulfil them.

IV. THE RESULT OF THE PROMISES: "The glory of God by us."

By us, his ministers and his believing people, the God of the promises is made glorious.

1. We glorify his condescending love in making the promise.
2. We glorify his power as we see him keeping the promise.
3. We glorify him by our faith, which honours his veracity, by expecting the boons which he has promised.
4. We glorify him in our experience which proves the promise true.

Let us confidently rest in his sure word.

Let us plead the special promise applicable to the hour now passing.

GATHERINGS

A speaker at the Fulton Street prayer-meeting said, "I count all cheques as cash when I am making up my money and striking a balance;" and so, when we feel that we have not much of this world's goods, we can at least take hold of God's promises, for they are just so many drafts at sight upon divine mercy, and we may count them among our possessions. Then we shall feel rich, and the soul is rich who trusts God's word and takes his promises as something for present use.

In the streets of ancient Pompeii there still remain the three stepping-stones, placed here and there, by which men crossed over the street when the water was high. The promises are such stepping-stones on which "the wayfaring man" may place his footstep and be enabled the better to cross some stream of trouble or doubt, or, perhaps, with more ease and safety to escape the mire of some Slough of Despond.

Promises are like the clothes we wear; if there is life in the body they warm us, but not otherwise. When there is living faith the promise will afford warm comfort, but on a dead, unbelieving heart it lies cold and ineffectual. It has no more effect than pouring a cordial down the throat of a corpse.—William Gurnell.

If thou lean upon the promises of God themselves, and not upon Jesus Christ in them, all will come to nothing.... Whence is it that so many souls bring a promise to the throne of grace, and carry so little away from it? They lean upon the promises without leaning on Christ in the promise.—Faithful Teate.

"By us" as ministers—publishing, explaining, applying them. A promise is often like a box of ointment, very precious; but the fragrance does not fill the room till the preacher breaks it. Or it is like the water that was near Hagar, which she saw not, till the angel of the Lord opens our eyes and shows us the well. "By us" as believers realizing the excellency and efficacy of them in our character and conduct. It is when these promises are reduced to experience—when they are seen cleansing us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, making us partakers of the divine nature, leading us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, filling us with kindness and benevolence, supporting us cheerfully under all our trials—it is then they glorify God "by us."

William Jay.

2 Cor. 7:1+—"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Kindling with strong emotion, constrained by the love of Christ, and animated by the fellowship of all spiritual blessings, the apostle here strikes out an exhortation, in which he appeals to the noblest passions of the children of God, to their possession of divine lineage, a present endowment, and their expectation of an exalted destiny. These he uses as incentives to holiness of life.

To stir up in us this godly ambition he sets before us the Christian in various lights—

I. AS POSSESSED OF MOST GLORIOUS PRIVILEGES. "Having these promises." Not promises in reversion merely, but in actual possession, received, embraced, enjoyed.

The promises referred to are mentioned in the previous chapter.

1. Divine indwelling: "I will dwell in them." (Chap. 6:16.)
2. Divine manifestation: "I will walk in them."
3. Divine covenanting: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."
4. Divine acceptance: "I will receive you." (Chap. 6:17.)
5. Divine adoption: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (Chap. 6:18.)

6:18.)

These promises are already fulfilled in our experience.

II. AS LABOURING TO BE RID OF OBNOXIOUS EVILS. "Let us cleanse ourselves." The matter has in it—

1. Personality: "Let us cleanse ourselves."
2. Activity: we must continue vigorously to cleanse both body and mind.
3. Universality: "From all filthiness."

4. Thoroughness: "Of the flesh and spirit."

If God dwells in us, let us make the house clean for so pure a God.

Has the Lord entered into covenant with us that we should be his people? Does not this involve a call upon us to live as becometh godliness?

Are we his children? Let us not grieve our Father, but imitate him as dear children.

III. AS AIMING AT A MOST EXALTED POSITION. "Perfecting holiness."

1. We must set before us perfect holiness as a thing to be reached.
2. We must blame ourselves if we fall short of it.
3. We must continue in any degree of holiness which we have reached.
4. We must agonize after the perfecting of our character.

IV. AS PROMPTED BY THE MOST SACRED OF MOTIVES. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

1. The fear of God casts out the fear of man, and thus saves us from one prolific cause of sin.
2. The fear of God casts out the love of sin, and with the root the fruit is sure to go.
3. The fear of God works in and through love to him, and this is a great factor of holiness.
4. The fear of God is the root of faith, worship, obedience, and so it produces all manner of holy service.

See how promises supply arguments for precepts.

See how precepts naturally grow out of promises.

OUTPOURINGS

"Cleanse ourselves." It is the Lord that is the sanctifier of his people, he purges away their dross and tin. He pours clean water, according to his promises, yet doth he call us to cleanse ourselves; having such promises, let us cleanse ourselves. He puts a new life into us, and causes us to act, and excites us to excite it, and call it up to act in the progress of sanctification. Men are strangely inclined to a perverse construction of things: tell them that we are to act and work, and give diligence, then they would fancy a doing in their own strength, and be their own saviours. Again, tell them that God works all our works in us, and for us, then they would take the ease of doing nothing: if they cannot have the praise of doing all, they will sit still with folded hands, and use no diligence at all. But this is the corrupt logic of the flesh; its base sophistry. The apostle reasons just contrary, Phil. 2:13: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do." Therefore, would a carnal heart say, we need not work, or at least, may work very carelessly. But he infers, "Therefore let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling," i. e., in the more humble obedience to God, and dependence on him, not obstructing the influences of his grace, and, by sloth and negligence, provoking him to withdraw or abate it. Certainly many in whom there is truth of grace, are kept low in the growth of it by their own slothfulness, sitting still, and not bestirring themselves, and exercising the proper actions of that spiritual life, by which it is entertained and advanced.—Archbishop Leighton.

Virtue, for ever frail, as fair, below,
Her tender nature suffers in the crowd,
Nor touches on the world without a stain:
The world's infectious; few bring back at eve,
Immaculate, the manners of the morn—
Something we thought, is blotted; we resolved,
Is shaken; we renounc'd, returns again.

Edward Young.

"Let us go on to perfection" (Heb. 6:1) should rather be rendered, "Let us be carried on."... If we are unable to go on, we are surely able to be carried on to perfection.—Charles Stanford.

The promises, as they have a quickening, so they have a purging power; and that upon sound reasoning. Doth God promise that he will be my Father, and I shall be his son? and doth he promise me life everlasting? and doth that estate require purity? and no unclean thing shall come there? Certainly, these promises being apprehended by faith, as they have a quickening power to comfort, so they purge with holiness. We may not think to carry our filthiness to heaven. Doth the swearer think to carry his blasphemies thither? Filthy persons and liars are banished thence, there is "no unclean thing." He that hath these promises purgeth himself, and "perfecteth holiness in the fear of God." "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, as he is pure": 1 John 3:3.—Richard Sibbes.

A spiritual mind has something of the nature of the sensitive plant: a holy shrinking from the touch of evil.—Richard Cecil.

2 Cor. 7:10+—"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Time was when inner experience was considered to be everything, and experimental preaching was the order of the day.

Now it is apt to be too much slighted.

Introspection was formerly pushed to the extreme of morbid self-searching; yet it ought not now to be utterly abandoned.

A correct diagnosis of disease is not everything, but yet it is valuable.

A sense of poverty cannot by itself enrich, but it may stimulate.

Sinners were unwisely influenced by certain ministries to look to their own feelings, many began to seek comfort from their own misery.

Now it is "only believe." And rightly so: but we must discriminate.

There must be sorrow for sin working repentance.

Upon this point we must—

I. REMOVE CERTAIN ERRONEOUS IDEAS WITH REGARD TO REPENTANCE AND SORROW FOR SIN.

Among popular delusions we must mention the suppositions—

1. That mere sorrow of mind in reference to sin is repentance.
2. That there can be repentance without sorrow for sin.
3. That we must reach a certain point of wretchedness and horror, of else we are not truly penitent.
4. That repentance happens to us once, and is then over.
5. That repentance is a most unhappy feeling.
6. That repentance must be mixed with unbelief, and embittered by the fear that mercy will be unable to meet our wretched case.

II. DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO SORROWS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

1. The godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation is—

Sorrow for sin as committed against God.

Sorrow for sin arising out of an entire change of mind.

Sorrow for sin which joyfully accepts salvation by grace.

Sorrow for sin leading to future obedience.

Sorrow for sin which leads to perpetual perseverance in the ways of God. The ways of sin are forsaken because abhorred.

This kind of repentance is never repented of.

2. The sorrow of the world is

Caused by shame at being found out;

Is attended by hard thoughts of God;

Leads to vexation and sullenness;

Incites to hardening of heart;

Lands the soul in despair.

Works death of the worst kind.

This needs to be repented of, for it is in itself sinful and terribly prolific of more sin.

III. INDULGE OURSELVES IN GODLY SORROW FOR SIN.

Come, let us be filled with a wholesome grief that we

1. Have broken a law, pure and perfect.
2. Have disobeyed a gospel, divine and gracious.
3. Have grieved a God, good and glorious.
4. Have slighted Jesus, whose love is tender and boundless.
5. Have been ungrateful, though loved, elected, redeemed, forgiven, justified, and soon to be glorified.
6. Have been so foolish as to lose the joyous fellowship of the Spirit the raptures of communion with Jesus.

Let us confess all this, lie low at Jesus' feet, wash his feet with tears, and love, yea, love ourselves away.

FOR DISCRIMINATION

A cognate text in Rom. 2:2, 4, will help us here. These two allied but distinct intimations may be placed in parallel lines, and treated like an equation; thus—

"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance."

We learn, as the result of the comparison, that the goodness of God leads to repentance by the way of godly sorrow. The series of cause and effect runs thus: goodness of God; godly sorrow; repentance.

Do not mistake; a fear of hell is not sorrow for sin: it may be nothing more than a regret that God is holy.

So hard is a heart long accustomed to evil, that nothing can melt it but goodness; and no goodness but God's; and no goodness of his but the greatest. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. "Looking unto Jesus" is the grand specific for producing godly sorrow in a human heart. It was a hard heart that quivered under the beams of his loving eye on the threshold of Pilate's judgment hall. When Jesus looked on Peter, Peter went out and wept. Emmanuel's love has lost none of its melting power; the hardest hearts laid fairly open to it must ere long flow down. God's goodness, embodied in Christ crucified, becomes, under the ministry of the Spirit, the cause of godly sorrow in believing men.—William Arnot.

The mind that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,
Till inly searched by thousand throes,
And maddening in her ire,
One sad and sole relief she knows,
The sting she nourished for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain;
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like scorpion girt by fire.
So writhes the mind Remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it Death.—Byron.

Once a mother told her pastor that she was troubled about her daughter, who was going to join the church. "She has not conviction enough," was the complaint; "and yet I have talked to her about her sins over and over again, setting them all in order before her till both of us were in tears; oh, what can I do more?" Then he gave her in her own hands a Bible, and he read aloud to her slowly Isaiah 6:1–5. She saw, without any word of his, that the prophet became intelligent as the sight of God flashed upon him, and grew penitent at the moment when the seraphim cried "Holy." Then he turned to Job 42:5, 6. She saw in silence that the patriarch repented, not when his exasperating friends pelted him with accusations, but when his eyes were opened to see God. She went away quietly to talk, with a wondering and awestruck heart, about the holiness of Jehovah; thus her child melted into contrition before the vision, and wept.—C. S. Robinson.

Sin, repentance, and pardon are like to the three vernal months of the year, March, April, and May. Sin comes in like March, blustering, stormy, and full of bold violence. Repentance succeeds like April, showering, weeping, and full of tears. Pardon follows like May, springing, singing, full of joys and flowers. Our eyes must be full of April, with the sorrow of repentance; and then our hearts shall be full of May, with the true joy of forgiveness.—Thomas Adams.