**Charles Simeon Devotional Commentaries**

**ISAIAH**

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**#856**

***~~GOD'S COMPLAINT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE~~***

**[Isaiah 1:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.2-3)**

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not consider." KJV

"Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." NIV

It is the Lord God Almighty that now speaks respecting us! Let every ear attend; let every heart be humbled in the dust before him. He has a controversy with us, and a complaint against us; and he summons both Heaven and earth to attest the truth of his charge, and the equity of his judgment. Though he is a Sovereign, and amenable to none—yet he does frequently make his appeal to the whole creation, and constitute his creatures judges between himself and us, [Micah 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.2). In this charge we behold,

***~~I. The evil we have committed.~~***

***~~The charge is surely in the first place uttered against the Jews.~~***

God had truly "nourished them, and brought them up as children."

He had *chosen*them to himself, as his special people;  
he had *brought them out of Egypt*with a mighty hand, and an out-stretched arm;  
he had *fed*and *supported*them forty years in the wilderness;  
he had given them a *revelation*of his mind and will;  
and he had planted them in that good *land*which he had promised to their fathers.

In all this he had acted towards them with all the *care*and *tenderness*of a most affectionate Father, [Deuteronomy 1:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 1.31); [Deuteronomy 32:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.9-12).

But how had they requited him for all his kindness? From the very beginning they showed themselves to be a rebellious and stiff-necked people! [Deuteronomy 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.24). They were always *murmuring*under every succeeding trial, and *distrusting*God in every difficulty, and in heart *going back* to the flesh-pots of Egypt! They were often ready to stone those servants of God who had been the instruments of their deliverance; they retained their idols which they had worshiped in Egypt; and even made a golden calf, as the representative, or rather, as the rival and competitor, of Jehovah. *In their history we find some seasons of amendment; but, on the whole, they were "a rebellious and gainsaying people."*

**But the charge is no less applicable to ourselves.**

Certainly we are quite as much indebted to the Lord as ever the Jews of old were; for though we have not had such visible interpositions in our favor, we have been no less the objects of his paternal care; and, in that which constituted their "chief advantage"—we greatly excel them, [Romans 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.2)." "To them were committed the Oracles of God;" but to us is given the Gospel of his dear Son; in comparison with which the Law, glorious as it was, had no glory at all; being eclipsed as a star before the meridian sun, [2 Corinthians 3:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.7-11).

And what has been our conduct towards him?

Have we been sensible of the benefits conferred upon us?

Have we endeavored to render to him the recompense that was due?

Alas! we have been unmindful of his kindness, and regardless of his authority altogether. It has never entered into our hearts to say, "Come, let us serve the Lord, who has done such great things for us! [Jeremiah 2:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5-6); [Jeremiah 5:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.23-24)." While we have violated his holy laws, we have "puffed at his judgments," saying in our hearts, "God sees not, neither regards what we do!" If called to obey him, we have replied, in spirit, if not in word, "Who is the Lord, that we should serve him? We know not the Lord, neither will we obey his voice! [Job 21:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 21.14-15). [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.2)." "Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4)?" In truth, we have lived "without God in the world, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12);" and have *practically*said, "There is no God! [Psalm 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1)."

Not content with charging upon us our multiplied rebellions, God proceeds to set forth,

***~~II. The extent of our criminality.~~***

***~~The brute creation conduct themselves for the most part, in a way suited to their several capacities.~~***

The ox and the donkey are among the most stupid of the brute creation; yet have they some knowledge of their master, and some sense of their dependence on him. Though fed only for their master's benefit, and used only to serve his interests, they often express themselves with a kind of grateful acknowledgment towards him.

***~~But we, notwithstanding our superior advantages, act more irrationally than the the brutes!~~***

We live from year to year on the bounty of our heavenly Father, and yet feel no sense of gratitude towards him.

We "do not even consider" our obligations to him.

We "do not consider" what he has done for us; though it is so great, that neither the tongues of men or of angels can ever worthily declare it.

We "do not consider" what he requires of us; though that should be the subject of our unceasing contemplation.

We "do not consider" what return we have hitherto made to him; though on that our eternal happiness depends.

We "do not consider" what account we shall hereafter give to him; though we know not but that before the expiration of another hour we may be summoned into his immediate presence!

In a word, God's testimony respecting us is, that "he is not in all, or any, of our thoughts! [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4)."

Of the brute creation there are many that act with a degree of foresight and wisdom, [Proverbs 6:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 6.6-8). [Jeremiah 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 8.7). But we, who are endued with reason, act a part more irrational than they; and hence are justly reproached by God as more brutish and sottish than even the ox and donkey! [Jeremiah 4:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 4.22); [Jeremiah 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.21). How humiliating is this view of our state, and especially in relation to people who have been redeemed by the blood of God's only dear Son! Truly there is not one among us who has not reason to blush and be confounded under the accusations that are brought against us.

***~~In conclusion, we will,~~***

***~~1. Inquire what plea you can offer in your own behalf?~~***

We know that the young, the old, the rich, the poor—have all their appropriate excuses; but what plea have they that will avail them at the bar of judgment? Will any deny the charge! Alas! alas!

Where is there one among us that has not been a rebel from the womb?

Where is there one among us that has ever equaled the ox or donkey in their attachment to him who feeds them, and their willing submission to his yoke?

We must confess, every one of us, that we have not so much as considered:  
our obligations to God,  
or our duties to him,  
or our eternal interests,  
or our true happiness in any respect  
—unless we have been renewed in our minds by the Spirit of God himself. Let us then put away all our vain pleas and excuses, and adopt, each of us for himself, the language of Agur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man! [Proverbs 30:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 30.2)." If we feel not the depth of our depravity, and refuse to humble ourselves before God—we do in fact "make God a liar," and provoke him to execute upon us the judgments we have deserved.

***~~2. Suggest a plea which you may offer with safety to your souls.~~***

Vile as we are, Christ died for us; and his death shall avail even for the chief of sinners! Hear with what confidence it was pleaded by the Apostle Paul, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died." Does anyone imagine that he is unworthy to hope that this plea shall ever avail for him? God himself, at the very time that he most fully expatiates on our guilt, puts this plea into our mouths, and declares that, if we offer it before him, it shall avail for our justification in the last day! [Isaiah 43:22-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.22-26).

Let us then rely simply on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and plead his merits at the throne of grace. Then, if Heaven and earth do testify our desert of eternal condemnation, they shall testify also our trust in the Divine "promises, which in Christ are yes, and in him Amen, to the everlasting glory of our offended God! 2 Corinthians 1:20."

***~~#857~~***

***~~THE SINFULNESS AND INCORRIGIBLENESS OF THE NATION~~***

**[Isaiah 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.4-5)**

"Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken any more? you will revolt more and more." KJV

"Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted!" NIV

The end for which God inflicts punishment upon his professing people, is, to bring them to repentance, and thereby prevent the necessity of punishing them in the eternal world; and when this end is not answered, he leaves them to themselves to follow the imaginations of their own hearts, and to bring upon themselves the accumulated weight of God's wrath. But before he utterly abandons them, he sends them many solemn warnings, if that by any means he may prevail upon them to turn unto him. Extremely solemn is the reproof which he gave the Jews in the passage before us; he summons Heaven and earth to hear his controversy, and to judge between him and his people; and then, in a way of affectionate expostulation, he threatens to cease from visiting them with parental chastisements, and to leave them to fill up the measure of their iniquities!

The words of our text, accommodated as they may be to our present circumstances (a time of war and of great national calamity,) naturally lead us to set before you,

***~~I. Our sinfulness.~~***

***~~The general description given of the Jews is equally suitable to us.~~***

We are a "nation" extremely and universally "sinful".

We are "laden with" every species of "iniquity".

We are "a seed of evil-doers".

All ranks and orders of men among us are depraved.

The transgressions of individuals are indeed exceeding various; but sin of some kind is the delight of all—yes, sin is the very element wherein we live!

Nor are we merely corrupt, but "corrupters" of each other, laughing religion out of the world, and hardening one another in the commission of sin!

***~~Nor is the particular charge that is brought against them, less applicable to us.~~***

It is lamentable to see what a general dereliction of religious principle prevails among us. Men do not indeed *formally*renounce Christianity; but "they forsake the Lord" as unworthy of their love or confidence. By an inward "apostasy" of the heart, we "provoke the Holy One of Israel to anger."

We might adduce a great variety of charges in confirmation of this; but we will notice only one, namely—our dependence on our fleets and armies, rather than on God. Instead of this, might be specified, our not seeing and acknowledging the hand of God in his judgments. This is peculiarly provoking to God, because it is a virtual denial of his providence, and an excluding of him from the government of His world! See [Isaiah 22:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 22.8-11) and [Jeremiah 17:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.1).

But besides these things, there is a further charge to be brought against us, on account of,

***~~II. Our incorrigibleness.~~***

***~~What improvement have we made of our late chastisements?~~***

Almost every kind of plague—as war, famine, and pestilence, has been lately sent to us by God. This, of course, must be accommodated to existing circumstances; and what are we profited by them?

What national sin has been put away?

What unregenerate man has laid to heart his transgressions, and turned to the Lord?

Does not sin reign among us as much as ever?

Are we not like the incorrigible Jews, [Jeremiah 5:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.3-5); or rather like King Ahaz, who had a brand of infamy set upon him on this very account, that "he trespassed yet more in his distress! 2 Chronicles 28:22."

***~~What reason then have we to hope that our present troubles will be sanctified to our good?~~***

From past experience, we have reason to fear that we shall still remain a perverse and rebellious people, and only "revolt more and more." And, if God foresees that this will be the case, what can we expect, but that our present troubles should be sent, not for our *correction*, but for our *utter destruction!*What can we expect, but that he should execute upon us the vengeance he has threatened, [Ezekiel 24:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 24.13-14), and that "his wrath should now come upon us to the uttermost!"

***~~Advice.~~***

**1. Let us adore our God for the patience he has long exercised towards us!**[2 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.15). [Romans 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.4).

**2. Let us tremble at his judgments now impending over us.**How soon may we find those threatenings fulfilled! [Leviticus 26:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.27-28); [Leviticus 26:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.36-37).

**3. Let us take encouragement from his present dealings with us, to turn unto him.**See [Jeremiah 18:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 18.7-8) and [Judges 10:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 10.15-16).

***~~#858~~***

***~~THE SERVICE WHICH ALONE IS PLEASING TO GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 1:10-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.10-17)~~***

"Hear the Word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah; To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." KJV

"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow!" NIV

Though *tenderness*and *compassion*are essential requisites for a Christian minister—yet is *fidelity*also indispensable for a due discharge of his duties. If even a young minister, like Timothy, was to "reprove and rebuke with all authority"—then it must become every servant of God, especially when dealing with hypocritical professors or hardened sinners, to "use great plainness of speech."

It is true that a minister in this day has not the same license as was given to the prophets of old; we should not altogether think him justified in calling his audience "Rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah;" but, when speaking in Jehovah's name, we must expostulate with all, even with the greatest of men, and declare to them as the prophet does, the only way in which they can please and serve God. With this view the prophet used the language in our text; and in prosecution of the same end, we shall now declare,

***~~I. The inadequacy of ritual observances.~~***

The Jews were prone to rest in a compliance with the ceremonial law; and our text is, as it were by anticipation, an answer to their self-justifying remarks. They are supposed to have said, "How can you justly complain of us? We have served God with the most commendable zeal; we have offered him sacrifices. Yes many and of the best kind, and in the appointed manner, and with great reverence, and we have abounded in spiritual services also, no less than in carnal rituals."

But, in answer to all this, God indignantly replies, that, instead of being pleased with these services, he loathed and abhorred them; since, in the midst of all their boasted regard for him, they held fast their besetting sins verse 10-15. The particular expressions throughout this whole passage are very emphatic, and worthy of attentive observation.

The Jewish rituals now being abolished, it may be thought that this address is inapplicable to any of the present day; but it may justly be applied,

***~~1. To self-righteous formalists.~~***

There is still, as Solomon expresses it, "a generation that is pure in their own eyes, but are not washed from their filthiness!"*There are many whose whole religion consists in a performance of outward rituals.* Among the Papists this is an acknowledged fact; but it is also true of us Protestants, though to a less extent than it was a century ago. A regular attendance on all the public ordinances; a strict observance of the fasts and feasts of our Church, particularly of the time of Lent; a daily reading of the Psalms and Lessons for the day, and a recital of certain prayers; a rigid adherence to some particular religious forms, with an uncharitable censuring of all who are not equally strict in their attention to them—these, and other similar habits, form the ground of their hopes and of a self-complacent confidence towards God.

But, with all these apparently religious rituals and habits:  
their views, desires, and pursuits are altogether earthly;  
their friends and associates are men of this world;  
and vital godliness, together with all who possess it, is regarded by them with suspicion and dislike.

Now, whatever such people may think of themselves, they are by no means in a state acceptable to God. Instead of looking with humility and contrition to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, they are ready to claim Heaven as the reward of their good deeds. And instead of loving, for the Redeemer's sake, every member of his mystical body, they are among the foremost to despise and persecute his believing people. While therefore they, in effect, say, "Stand off, I am holier than you!" they are, as God declares, "a stench in his nose! Compare [Isaiah 65:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.5) with [Luke 18:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.9); [Luke 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.14)."

***~~2. To many who make a profession of vital godliness.~~***

Many there are whose views of the Gospel are correct, but who are far from experiencing all that it is designed to teach them.

Their zeal for the Gospel is great and ardent.

They will go miles to hear it faithfully proclaimed.

They will lose no opportunity of attending their favorite minister.

Their very life seems to be spent as it were in hearing sermons. They will largely subscribe for building places of worship, especially for the use of those who are of their own sect and party.

They are fond of prayer-meetings, and religious societies; and perhaps of *displaying*their own talents of knowledge or prayer.

But, instead of using these things as means to a farther advancement in holiness, they regard them only its sources of present gratification, and as evidences of a pious mind. While at the same time *they are destitute of all those tempers and dispositions, which are the chief ornament of religion, and the surest evidences of its existence in the soul*.

We read of *Ezekiel's hearers*, that they attended his ministrations with great delight, and listened to him as people fond of music would to a great proficient in that art; and laid claim to superior piety on that account. But, "though they *heard*Ezekiel's words, they would not *do*them; for their heart went after their covetousness! [Ezekiel 33:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.31-32), See also [Isaiah 58:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.2)."

Now this is an exact description of the people we refer to. They are:  
conceited of their own knowledge and attainments,  
uncharitable towards those who differ from them,  
contemptuous towards those who are less instructed than themselves,  
regardless of the prejudices of others, and  
indifferent about the effect of their conduct upon them.

They often make religion a cloak for idleness in their respective callings;  
they are headstrong and intractable, and insolent towards their superiors;  
they often cannot be depended on, even for truth in their words, or honesty in their dealings.

What shall we say of such *professors*as these? Are they in a state pleasing unto God? No! They are an offence both to God and man; and their very best sacrifices are no better than "the cutting off of a dog's neck, or the offering of swine's blood! [Isaiah 66:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2-3)."

While our text thus forcibly declares the insufficiency of outward duties to please God, it sets forth in the strongest terms,

***~~II. The necessity of moral attainments.~~***

In relation to these, two things are required;

***~~1. A renunciation of habitual sins.~~***

Every person has some sins which more easily beset him, and which he is in a more especial manner called to mortify. We will not speak of gross open sins, as swearing and drunkenness, and such like; for no man who reflects at all, can suppose it possible to please God, while he is guilty of such flagrant abominations.  
But one man is naturally addicted to anger and passion;  
another to discontent and envy;  
another to lewdness and impurity;  
another to sloth and idleness;  
another to covetousness;  
one is filled with conceit and vanity;  
another with skepticism and infidelity;  
another with unbelieving fears.

In a word, however the conduct of men may differ as to the immediate line which they pursue—they all, in their natural state, chiefly desire pleasure, or riches, or honor, and feel abundantly more satisfaction in the things of time and sense, than they do in the service of their God!

Now every man is concerned to find out what his besetting sin is; for if we must all without exception become "new creatures in Christ Jesus," if "old things must pass away, and all things must become new"—then it is necessary that we all should experience this change, and have an evidence of it in our own souls.

Earnestly would we press this thought upon the minds of those who have been externally blameless in their conduct; for it is common for people of this description to be satisfied with a change in their opinions, though they have never experienced any change in their hearts and lives! We all have, though certainly in different degrees, a need of that exhortation: "Wash, cleanse yourself; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes." It is possible that very little change can be needed by us that is visible to man; but there is no natural man under Heaven, who does not need to be greatly changed in the sight of God; and to him it is that we must approve ourselves, if ever we would be accepted in his sight.

***~~2. A performance of neglected duties.~~***

True piety will not consist with any allowed sin, whether of commission or of omission. But if we look back to our unregenerate state, how many duties are there, both to God and man, that we have neglected! By nature we are satisfied with doing acts of kindness when they come in our way; but we do not live for God, and our fellow-creatures; we do not search out occasions for the exercise of our benevolence, nor do we redeem our time in order to effect the greatest good within our reach.

But, if we would please end honor God, we must imitate him who "went about doing good." Our time, our talents, our influence must all be put forth for:  
the relief of the needy,  
the comfort of the afflicted,  
the supporting of the oppressed,  
and especially for the spiritual benefit of all.

We must also cultivate every kind of grace; not only putting off what is evil, but putting on what is good. In particular, "as the elect of God, we should clothe ourselves with mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and patience; forbearing one another and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us! [Colossians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.8); [Colossians 3:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-14)." These are the things which God prefers to all the sacrifices that can be offered! [Psalm 50:8-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.8-14). [Micah 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.7-8). Without these, all that we can possess is in his estimation lighter than vanity itself! [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.1-3)."

***~~From hence then we may see,~~***

***~~1. The nature of true religion.~~***

That there are many who greatly mistake its nature, is evident from our text; but, when duly received into the heart, it neither insists on spiritual exercises to the neglect of moral virtues, nor on moral virtues to the neglect of communion with God; it has equal respect to both the tablets of the Law.

Do not let any then attempt to put asunder what God has so inseparably joined.

Do not let any trust to their moral virtues on the one hand, nor to their spiritual exercises on the other; but let it be the endeavor of all to "have respect unto *all*the commandments," and to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

***~~2. The danger of self-deceit.~~***

We think it evident, that the people here addressed as "Rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah," had by no means formed a just estimate of their own character. And we all see among those around us many who lie under a similar delusion: the conceited professor sees the blindness of the Pharisee, while the Pharisee notices with equal clearness his vain conceit. Professors too notice each other's failings, and often, with too much reason, stand in doubt of each other. But all are blind to their own failings; they make far too much allowance for their own evils; and sometimes glory in them as virtues. o confident are many, of their own acceptance before God, that they will almost at the bar of judgment challenge God that they deserve Heaven! [Matthew 25:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.44). But, while they remain under the power of any allowed sin, "their religion is vain! [James 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.26)," and their Judge will disclaim all knowledge of them! [Matthew 7:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.22-23). *Yes, their unmortified lust, whatever it is, will plunge their souls into everlasting perdition!*[Matthew 5:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.29-30).

We do not say this to discourage the sincere Christian, but to put all upon their guard, and especially to bring to self-examination those who are most confident that all is well with them. For it is certain that "the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath," and "tearfulness will surprise them" in the day of judgment! [Isaiah 33:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.14). .

***~~3. The excellency of the Gospel.~~***

The Gospel not only teaches us these things, [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12), but shows us where *pardon*for all our transgressions may be obtained, and how *strength*may be acquired for the discharge of all our duties. Even under the law, these views were revealed; for, in the words following our text, God told his people, that their scarlet sins would, if mourned over and forsaken, "become white as snow!" And in other places he promised his Spirit to "write his laws upon their hearts," and to "cause them to keep his statutes! [Ezekiel 36:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.27)."

But under the Gospel dispensation, the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood to "cleanse from sin," and of his grace to renew the heart, is declared in the strongest terms, [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7); [1 John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.9). Hence then, when it is said, "Wash, cleanse yourselves," there is no room to say, "I cannot!" For "the grace of Christ is sufficient" for all, and "we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13)." Seek then to be washed in his blood, and to be sanctified by his Spirit—and then the smallest of your offerings, even a cup of cold water, shall be an acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God! [1 Peter 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.5).

***~~#859~~***

***~~CRIMSON SINS MADE WHITE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18)~~***

"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!"

Man is a rational being; and, though prone to abuse his reason for the vindication of his own evil ways—yet he is capable of judging when sound argument is proposed for his consideration. Hence God addresses himself to our reason, and makes his appeal to the whole creation, when our pride or obstinacy prevent us from acknowledging the truth of his assertions.

The chapter before us exhibits a judicial process; Heaven and earth are called as witnesses against Israel; the charge against them is opened in verses 2, 3, and their vindication of themselves is duly considered. Their reply is not set down at length; but it may be gathered from the answer given to it by God.

They plead:  
that they have offered sacrifices, yes, many, and of the fattest of their flocks;  
that they have done this themselves, before God in the temple, with great reverence;  
that they have presented other offerings also; that they have observed the stated feasts;  
and that, instead of resting in carnal ceremonies, they had joined with them the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise.

God follows them through their objections, and leaves them not a word to add, verses 11-15. Having convicted them of their iniquities, God invites them to come and reason with him, and shows them a better way of pleading for themselves.

It is by his ministers that he now condescends to reason with mankind. We therefore propose to you on this occasion in God's stead, and will argue with you upon, the two most important of all points, the *necessity*and the *efficacy*of a pious life:

***~~I. The necessity of a pious life.~~***

***~~The common reasonings of men on this subject are extremely futile and erroneous.~~***

We are too apt to "confer with flesh and blood," and to be misled by the suggestions of our own evil hearts. *The world around us, and our own corrupt nature, unite in asserting, that a life of devotedness to God is not necessary, not desirable, not practical*. 'How can it be imagined,' say these objectors, 'that God should require all people to live in such a holy self-denying way as the first Christians did? It might be proper for *them*in the infancy of Christianity to set such an example; but it cannot be necessary for *us*in these times to follow it. And *to suppose that all who do not give up themselves to God as they did, are doomed to eternal misery, would be to make God a cruel tyrant, and to rob him of his noblest attributes of goodness and mercy!*Nor is it to be wished, that religion should operate now as it did then; for how could the affairs of nations be conducted, or the common offices of life be performed? There would be an end to trade, and to all the refinements of civilized society; and men must be brought back again to the simplicity and stupidity of the apostolic age. In short, it cannot be effected now. A few visionaries and enthusiasts may experience something, and pretend to a great deal more; but *to eradicate from the bosom the love of sin, and to raise the soul above all the things of time and sense, and to bring it into a state of habitual communion with God—is impossible*; unless we were all to be set apart to the work of religion, just as the Apostles were, and had nothing else to attend to.

Such are the reasonings of flesh and blood. But here is little else than mere unfounded assertion, which is contradicted by every page of the Holy Scriptures, and by the actual experience of thousands.

***~~Let us now, in God's name, reason with you on the same subject.~~***

Has not God done enough to merit all the services that you can possibly render him? Think of what he has done for you in creation and providence, and, above all, in the work of redemption, and then say, whether there "is anything which he could have done for you more than he has;" or whether, if he had permitted you to ask whatever you would as the price of your services, you could have ventured to have asked a thousandth part of what he has already done for you?*Could you have dared to make such a request as that he would give you his dear Son to die for you, and his Holy Spirit to instruct and sanctify you?*

Has he not promised you assistance for the performance of everything he has required of you? We acknowledge your impotency for that which is good; but that is no excuse for your disobedience, while he says, "My grace shall be sufficient for you." If his grace wrought effectually in the saints of old, it cannot but be as sufficient for you as for them.

Will not his love and favor amply compensate for all that you can either do or suffer for him? I might ask this question in reference to the tokens of his favor which he would give you now; but how much more hereafter! Can it be imagined that one saint in glory ever had the thought pass through his mind, that his reward was an inadequate recompense for his former labors?

Will not all of you at a future period wish that you had dedicated yourselves unreservedly to God? Many begin to express that wish on their dying bed; though many are so insensible even to the last, as to feel no regret upon the subject. But what does the soul of every man wish, the very instant it is separated from his body? If we could hear it speak then, we can have no doubt what its language would be. If it had not been convinced before, we have no doubt it is convinced then, that former reasonings were vain and delusive.

Much more we might easily urge in God's name; but this is sufficient to convince anyone who is open to conviction, that an entire surrender of ourselves to God is a good and "reasonable service."

From the latter clause of the text we are led to reason more especially with you respecting,

***~~II. The efficacy of a pious life.~~***

Men, driven from the false refuges of *presumption*, are ready to run into the contrary extreme of *despondency*; and, when convinced of the necessity of a holy life, to doubt, whether any efforts on their part will succeed for the attainment of eternal happiness.

***~~Here, as before, let us briefly consider the reasonings of flesh and blood.~~***

Many, under a sense of their past transgressions, will say:  
that it is too late for them to turn to God;  
that they have sinned away their day of grace;  
that they have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit;  
and that God has already sealed them up to final impenitence, and to everlasting condemnation!

But here, as in the former instance, is nothing but assertion founded on unwarrantable surmises and groundless fears. We know that such people will appeal to Scripture; but by what authority do they apply to themselves passages that have no real reference to their state, and make use of those passages to invalidate the plainest assertions of Holy Writ? If only they desire to come to God, they have an express assurance from God, that "he will never cast them out."

***~~Let us again, in God's name, oppose these reasonings by others that are more substantial.~~***

Is not God a God of infinite mercy and compassion? Search the Scriptures; see the representations which he gives of himself; how often is it said, "His mercy endures forever!" If then "he delights in mercy," then who are we that we should presume to limit him in the exercise of it towards ourselves?

Do not his *promises*extend to all the sins that you have ever committed? You know that he has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Moreover, read the words of our text; and doubt if you can.

But perhaps you will reply, that the sin against the Holy Spirit is excepted; and that that is the sin which you have committed. To that we answer, that if you desire to repent and turn unto God, it is not possible that you should have committed it; because, if you had committed it, you would have arrived at such a degree of obduracy, that you would glory in your shame, and never wish to repent at all.

*Have not the vilest of sinners already found acceptance with God?*Look at the character given of the Corinthians; and see whether you can be in a worse state than they; yet "they were washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God! [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9-11)." If you are alarmed about backslidings after conversion, see whether you have been worse than David and Peter; yet they were restored to the divine favor as soon as they repented themselves of their iniquities. And *myriads of others, once as vile as they, are at this very moment around the throne of God, rejoicing and triumphing in redeeming love*. What bar then can there be to your acceptance through "him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood?"

We forbear to urge other considerations, because if you can withstand these, there is no hope that any others could be urged with effect.

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who still hold out against God.~~***

We call Heaven and earth to witness against you, that you are most unreasonable creatures. The ox and the donkey are indeed more rational than you are in relation to your souls. They seek their true interests, and acknowledge their benefactor; would to God that you might be brought to do the same!

***~~2. Those who are convinced by his reasonings.~~***

Beware how you listen to the dictates of flesh and blood. You know how you have been deceived; be on your guard against fresh deceits. Regard not the laughter of a blind infatuated world. They may call you mad; but they, and they only, are "come to themselves," who have been brought to say, "I will return and go to my Father."

***~~#860~~***

***~~GOD PURIFYING HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.25)~~***

"I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin." KJV

"I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities!" NIV

In the Holy Scriptures, judgment is often denounced, and mercy promised, with such peculiar force and emphasis, as might lead one to imagine that it was almost a matter of indifference to Jehovah which of the two were called into exercise towards his offending creatures. But we know that "*judgment*is his strange act," to which he is utterly averse, [Isaiah 28:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.21); and that "*mercy*is the attribute in which he supremely delights, [Micah 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.18)." In the passage before us, however, he speaks as if he contemplated vengeance with a degree of pleasure and satisfaction, "Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies! [Isaiah 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.24)." On the other hand, in the words which I have just read, he expresses no less satisfaction in the thought of conferring benefits on his chosen remnant, whom he has determined to restore and save.

From them I shall be led to consider,

***~~I. The work which God will accomplish in all his chosen people.~~***

The whole passage primarily refers to the Jews; whom God will, at a distant period, restore to their own land, and elevate in the rank of nations; making them no less conspicuous for piety than in the most favored seasons of their former prosperity, verse 26, 27. In the promise made to them, we see what God will do for all his chosen people; cleansing them from their sins, and thereby fitting them:

***~~1. For his service on earth.~~***

God's people must be "a holy people," dedicated unreservedly to him. He will not accept "a divided heart, [Hosea 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 10.2)." He will not behold with satisfaction anyone that retains a bosom sin, though it is as dear as a right eye, or as useful as a right hand [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48). However loud such people's professions of attachment may be, he will say to them, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not practice the things which I say? [Luke 6:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.46)." The very "prayers of such people are an abomination to him, [Proverbs 28:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.9)." The hypocrite is, beyond all other people, an object of his abhorrence, [Job 36:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 36.13), "He requires truth in the inward parts [Psalm 51:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.6);" and, to please him, "we must be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no deceit, [John 1:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.47)."

***~~2. For his presence in the eternal world.~~***

"God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon iniquity, [Habakkuk 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 1.13);" much less could he admit into his presence in glory any soul that was not purged from its sins, [Ephesians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.5). [Revelation 21:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.27); nor, in truth, could a soul that was polluted with sin be happy in Heaven, even if he were admitted there. The holiness of God would utterly confound him; nor could he have any communion with the saints and angels that are around the throne. His lack of resemblance to them would make his deformity hateful, even in his own eyes; while their employment would be so distasteful to him, that he could not join in it for a single hour. Indeed the inhabitants of Heaven could not endure the presence of such a hateful being; but would all unite in "thrusting him out! [Luke 13:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.28)." As it is said of King Uzziah; When he was struck with leprosy in the Temple, the priests rose up to thrust him out, "yes, himself also hastened to go out, [2 Chronicles 26:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 26.20);" so I doubt not but that *an unholy soul would of itself hasten out of Heaven, because of the shame and misery it would feel in a place so unsuited to its dispositions and desires.*

Hence, then, God engages for his elect, that he will "turn his hand upon them, purely to purge away their dross, and to take away all their tin;" so that they may be "fit for the inheritance of Heaven, [Colossians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.12)," and "vessels of honor, fit for their Master's use, 2 Timothy 2:21."

Nor are we at any loss to declare,

***~~II. The means by which it shall be effected.~~***

God says, "he will turn his hand upon them, to purge them from their dross;" and this he will do:

**1. By the visitations of his Providence.**

Gold is put into a furnace, to purge it from its dross; and, in like manner, God has told us that he will subject his people to afflictions, "in order to purify them, that they may offer to him an offering in righteousness, [Malachi 3:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.3-5)." In this way shall God's ancient people be cleansed from their corruptions, and be made holy, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning, [Isaiah 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 4.3-4)."

So also shall his people, in every age, be purified. In truth, the experience of multitudes resembles that of David, when he says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept your Word! [Psalm 119:67](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.67)." It is by means of affliction that God brings us to consider our ways; by means of it, also, he humbles us before him, and prepares us for the manifestations of his love and mercy to our souls. Hence it is that *he promises correction to those who are the objects of his love*, [Psalm 89:30-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.30-34), and teaches us to *regard our trials as tokens of his paternal care and tenderness*,[Hebrews 12:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.5-11). He will, indeed, accommodate his dispensations to our necessities, "sitting by us as a refiner and purifier of silver," and watching the process for our good. He has told us, that he will "debate with us in measure, staying his rough wind in the day of his east wind; and that by this shall the iniquity of his people be purged; and this shall be the fruit to take away their sin, [Isaiah 27:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.8-9)."

***~~2. By the communications of his grace.~~***

Affliction, of itself, would only harden; as in the case of Pharaoh; and of those also who gnash their teeth, and blaspheme God in Hell! [Revelation 16:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 16.9-11). But *when divine grace is given to accompany and to sanctify the dispensation, then its end is answered, and the afflicted sinner returns in penitential sorrow to his God*. It was thus that Manasseh's most enormous wickedness was purged, "God took him among the thorns; and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon; and when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and so God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, [2 Chronicles 33:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 33.11-13).

In fact, "without the grace of Christ we can do nothing [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5);" it is "by his Spirit alone that we can mortify the deeds of the body, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13)," or "bring forth any fruits of righteousness to his praise and glory, [Philippians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.11)." But to all his chosen people God will "give more grace, [James 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.6)," even "grace sufficient for them, 2 Corinthians 12:9," whatever their necessities may be; and will thus "fulfill in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11."

***~~Let me now address myself,~~***

***~~1. To those who are trembling through fear of God's displeasure.~~***

Among those whose destruction God contemplated as a source of ease to his own mind, there was yet a remnant, towards whom he was "filled with thoughts of love." And why may not you be among that happy number? Certainly, if you have begun to "tremble at the Word of God, that very circumstance is a proof that "the Spirit of God is striving with you," and that you are not given over to a reprobate mind. Perhaps God has already said, "I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin;" and who can tell but that this may be the very hour fixed, in his divine counsels, for the accomplishment of this blessed end? Lift up your heart to him; and beg him now to work effectually upon you, that, *being created anew by him, and transformed into his image, you may serve him worthily on earth, and participate in his glory in the eternal world.*

***~~2. To those who are desiring to experience the full work of God's grace upon their souls.~~***

Do not limit God to any particular mode of acting; but be as clay in the potter's hands; and let him deal with you as, in his unerring wisdom, he shall see fit. If he is pleased to put you into a furnace, complain not of it; but say, 'This he has done to purge me from my dross.' You cannot but know that there is an abundance of dross within you. You cannot but be conscious that every thing which you do is very imperfect; your very prayers and your praises being little better, for the most part, than a cold and formal service! Will you not, then, have reason to bless his name, if, by any means, he purges you from your corruptions, and assimilate you to his divine image?

This, then, I say to you; If God send you any affliction, whether personal or domestic, "hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it! [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9)." Entreat of God to show you what *sin*it is that he would correct, or what *grace*it is that he would confirm and perfect within you. In a word, desire not deliverance from affliction, but a sanctified improvement of it to your soul. Thus shall all the purposes of his grace be accomplished; and when the end shall come, it shall be no grief to you, that "through much tribulation you entered into the kingdom of your God."

***~~#861~~***

***~~EXHORTATION TO A HOLY WALK~~***

***~~[Isaiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.5)~~***

"O house of Jacob, come you, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." KJV

"Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD!" NIV

There are many prophecies which are not yet accomplished, especially among those which are to be fulfilled "in the last days." The last days were understood even by the Jews themselves as relating to the days of the Messiah; and they comprehend all the time from his first coming in the flesh to the period when his kingdom shall be fully established upon earth. Hence the prophecies relating to that period must have different degrees of accomplishment; being partly fulfilled in the first triumphs of the Gospel, but having a further and more entire accomplishment when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus it is that we are to understand the prophecy contained in the preceding context.

"The mountain of the Lord's House," that is, the Gospel Church, was established on the top of the mountains in the apostolic age, when it triumphed over heathen idolatry and Jewish superstition; and myriads of converts encouraged one another to serve and glorify their God. But we have not yet seen the time when "swords have been beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and nations have ceased to learn and practice the art of war." That time however will come; and we should long, and labor to the utmost of our power, to hasten it forward. We should even now anticipate it; yes, we will anticipate it, "O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord!"

***~~I. Let us walk in the light of his truth.~~***

***~~His truth now shines in its meridian splendor.~~***

"The darkness is indeed past; and the true light now shines, [1 John 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.8)."  
"The day-star has arisen, [2 Peter 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.19);"  
"the day-spring from on high has visited us, [Luke 1:78-79](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.78-79);"  
"the Sun of Righteousness, [Malachi 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.2)" shines forth in his brightness; and the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is now so plain, that "no wayfaring man, though a fool, can err therein, [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8)."

"On the face of Moses there was a veil, that those who received the law should not see its full import; but if the Gospel is hidden, it is from those only whom the god of this world has blinded;" since "we may all with open (that is, unveiled) face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:13-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.13-18)."

***~~Let us then walk in it.~~***

Having the light, we should "believe in the light, that we may be the children of light, [John 12:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.35-36)." We should embrace with all thankfulness the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel.

We should "come to Christ," as the appointed Savior of a ruined world, [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28);  
we should "look to him," as dying upon the cross for us, [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22);  
we should "build upon him, as our only foundation, [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11);"  
and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, [Acts 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.23);"  
and "determine to know none but him, [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.2),"  
and to "glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.14)."

"Arise then, and be enlightened, for the light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you, [Isaiah 60:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1)."

While confiding in God as reconciled to us by the blood of the cross, we should endeavor to walk in the light.

***~~II. Let us walk in the light of his countenance.~~***

***~~This is the privilege of a true believer.~~***

So it is declared to be, by one who experienced it richly in his own soul, [Psalm 89:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.15). God presents himself to us in the Gospel under the endearing relations of a Father and a Friend, to whom we may carry every need, every trial, every difficulty; and from whom we may expect a supply according to our need. He will be not only "our God," but "a God unto us, [1 Chronicles 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Chron 17.24)," putting forth all his wisdom, all his love, and all his power, to make us truly blessed. He will engage in this work "with his whole heart and with his whole soul, [Jeremiah 32:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.41);" so that it must be utterly our own fault if we are not as holy, and as happy, as our hearts can wish.

***~~Let us then enjoy our privilege.~~***

Let us "walk with God," as Enoch did; and "glory in him as the God of our salvation." See what holy joy David found in communion with him, [Psalm 63:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.1-5) and [Psalm 145:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.1-12) and Psalm 150. And shall we who live under a so much nobler dispensation experience less? Shall not we, who have so much clearer views of Christ, "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory?" O let us "delight ourselves in God", and have even now, "in the secret of his presence" and the consolations of his Spirit—a pledge and a foretaste of our heavenly inheritance! [Psalm 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 31.20). [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14).

***~~III. Let us walk in the light of his commandments.~~***

These are given by him "as a light to our feet and a lantern to our paths".

Without them we would not "know how to walk and to please God;" but by them we are fully informed in all things that are needful for us to do, [Proverbs 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 6.23). They do not indeed descend to every particular circumstance in which we can be placed; but they afford *principles*which are universally applicable, and which are quite sufficient for our direction when duly applied. *The duty of "doing to others as we would like them to do unto us," is so comprehensive as to embrace every part of our social duty, while it is so simple that it may be comprehended and applied by every one who desires to please God.*

***~~Let us then make these the one rule of our conduct.~~***

Let us never attempt to live according to the standard of the world, but endeavor rather to raise our conduct to the standard of God's revealed will. Let us treasure up in our minds the most exalted precepts, and "hide God's Word in our hearts, that we may not sin against him;" for "then shall we not be ashamed, when we have respect unto all God's commandments".

***~~In addressing "the house of Jacob," we must speak to,~~***

***~~1. Those who are nominally so.~~***

It is but too true, that "all are not Israel, who are of Israel;" and those who are only of the house of Jacob by *name*and *profession*, may know it by their walk and conversation. Consider, I beg you, in what light you have walked. Is it not manifest, that the generality who call themselves Christians are influenced only by the things of time and sense; and that their principles and pursuits are altogether earthly? Know then, you lovers of this present evil world, that, if God's Word may be depended on, you are deluding yourselves to your eternal ruin! [Isaiah 50:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.11). You "sow the wind, and you shall reap the whirlwind! [Hosea 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 8.7)." When will you begin to see, that "one thing," and one thing only, "is needful?" When will you learn to say, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with you?" That you should seek present, as well as eternal, happiness, we grant; but you should seek it where David did, "Many are asking, 'Who can show us any good?' Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound! [Psalm 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 4.6-7)."

***~~2. Those who are really so.~~***

You have found that God in Christ is "a fountain of life; and in his light you have seen light, [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9)." You therefore are "children of the light and of the day." But if you are so highly distinguished in your *character*, think how distinguished you should also be in your *conduct,*[Ephesians 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.8). [1 Thessalonians 5:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.5-6). The eyes of all are upon you; they will look particularly to see whether religion is such a source of happiness as you profess. O show them that "you need neither the sun to lighten you by day, nor the moon by night, since the Lord has been a light unto you, and your God your glory, [Isaiah 60:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19)." Show them that *even in the greatest troubles you have a fountain of consolation to go unto*; and that "when you walk in darkness, the Lord is a light unto you, [Job 29:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 29.3). [Micah 7:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.8)." And, as it is eminently characteristic of Gospel times to encourage one another in the ways of God, see that you do so, "speaking one with another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord." Then, from enjoying God in his courts below, you shall be taken to serve him in his temple above, where your largest desires shall be satisfied, and your utmost capacities be filled! [Revelation 21:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.22-23). [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11).

***~~#862~~***

***~~FINAL STATE OF MAN~~***

***~~[Isaiah 3:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 3.10-11)~~***

KJV. "Say you to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

NIV. "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds.  
Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done!"

The ministers of the Gospel are "stewards of the mysteries of God," whose office it is "rightly to divide the Word of truth," and to "give every one his portion in due season." They are to "take forth the precious from the vile, and to be as God's mouth to all," declaring their true character, and their proper doom. Their commission is sealed in the words before us, and the very message they are to deliver as God's ambassadors, is recorded for their direction to the end of time. In complying with the duty here enjoined, we shall:

**I. Describe the characters that are to be addressed.**

***~~There are but two classes of men in the world, "the righteous" and "the wicked."~~***

However diversified men's states may be in some particulars, they all must be ranked under the one or the other of these heads. In distinguishing them, therefore, we must include in the first class, not merely the more eminent saints—but the least and lowest of God's people; seeing that there are in God's household "babes, and young men, as well as fathers, [1 John 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.13)."

And in the second class we must comprehend all those people, who, however admired by an undiscerning world, are reputed *wicked*in the sight of God.

I may say then, they are "righteous" who have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, and are following after universal holiness. And they, on the other hand, are "wicked," who are still in a carnal unregenerate state, and render only a *formal*and *partial*obedience to the divine law.

But that I may put this in the clearest possible light, I will say, They are "righteous," who make piety the great business of life, and prosecute it upon the principles of the Gospel; and all others without exception must be numbered among "the wicked."

Of course, I must not be understood to say that worldly business is to be neglected. On the contrary, it must be attended to with all diligence; but it must be followed in subserviency to the concerns of the soul. It must occupy, not the first, but the second place in our esteem. *The heart must be God's, and God's alone!*[Proverbs 23:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 23.26).

Now God sends a separate message to these distinct classes, and therefore it is of great importance that we should ascertain to which we belong. Let us then, before we proceed to the consideration of God's message, inquire seriously to which of these classes we belong?

Can we truly appeal to God, that, in the estimation of our minds and in the habit of our lives, the salvation of our soul is regarded as the one thing needful? If our conscience bears witness to the truth of this, then I must proceed yet further to ask, whether we *prosecute the concerns of the soul upon the principles of the Gospel?*

The *Pharisees*of old engaged with great ardor in religious duties; but they were not "righteous" in God's sight, because they sought by their religious observances to establish a righteousness of their own instead of submitting to the righteousness which God had provided for them, [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); [Romans 10:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.2-4).

So it is with the *Papists*, who observe with great strictness many religious rites, in the hope of recommending themselves thereby to the Divine favor.

But the religion of the *Gospel*is altogether different from this. It requires us to seek for acceptance solely through our Lord Jesus Christ, and to cleave unto him as "all our salvation, and all our desire." Say, then, brethren as before God, whether this is your experience from day to day? Say whether you are washing daily in the fountain of his blood, and clothing yourselves with his unspotted righteousness, and, from a sense of his redeeming love, endeavoring in all things to fulfill his holy will?

This, if carefully inquired into, will give a clear line of demarcation for us all; and we entreat all to arrange themselves, as it were, before God in that particular class to which conscience tells them they belong; and to attend with solemn awe, while we:

***~~II. Deliver God's message to each of them.~~***

God commands his ministers to "warn the wicked, [Ezekiel 33:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.7)," but to "comfort his people, [Isaiah 40:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.1)." In obedience to him, we will address:

***~~1. The righteous.~~***

That I may not "break any bruised reed," or "make sad the heart" of anyone that is truly upright, let me say, that in the first stages of the Christian course we must judge rather by our *desires*than by our actual attainments; not because our attainments should be less the objects of scrutiny than our desires, but because in reference to our desires we have a complete consciousness; while the defectiveness of our attainments makes us doubtful of our real integrity.

Taking this into consideration, I am aware that some, on account of the smallness of their attainments, may be saying, "I fear it will go badly with me at last." But God says, "It shall be well with you;" and, in despite of all your fears (if only you press forward in the ways of righteousness) it shall be well with you, in life, in death, and to all eternity! We cannot promise you affluence, or exemption from pain and trouble. But we can promise, in the name of God, that your trials, whatever they may be, shall work for good, [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28); that your latter end shall be peace, [Psalm 37:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.7); and that you shall have a crown of righteousness and glory at the instant of your departure from the body, [2 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.8).

These are the things which you labor to attain; and you shall surely "eat the fruit of your doings." Dismiss then your unbelieving fears; for this is the Word of your faithful God, whom neither the subtlety of Satan can deceive, nor his power be able to withstand.

***~~2. The wicked.~~***

Glad would we be, if we could say, It shall be well with you. But if we should dare to deliver such a message, the falsehood of it must immediately appear. Put it into language, and how horrible will it sound: Against you, God sends us to denounce woe, "Woe to the wicked! it shall be ill with him." You, under the influence of presumption, may be saying, "I hope, notwithstanding what is spoken in the Bible, that it will fare well with me at last." But, if there be any truth in God, it must go badly with you. Even in the midst of all your boasted enjoyments we defy you to say, that you have any solid peace, [Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.20-21). And in your dying hour, if you are not insensible as beasts, you will be full of regret and terror! [Ecclesiastes 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 5.17). And, after death, you will lie down in everlasting burnings! [Revelation 21:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.8).

Nor is this unjust, since you reap only what you sowed. You chose the world as your portion; and you have nothing beyond it; you "would have none of God, [Psalm 81:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.11);" and you have none of him. You said to him, "Depart [Job 21:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 21.14); [Job 22:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 22.17);" and he says to you, "Depart from Me! [Matthew 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.41)." In your banishment from God and Heaven, "the recompense of your own hands is given to you."

Painful it is to deliver such a message; but we must deliver it at the peril of our souls, [Ezekiel 33:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.8); and whether it is believed by you, or not, it shall be confirmed and ratified in Heaven [Matthew 18:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.18).

***~~We cannot conclude without recommending to your notice,~~***

***~~1. The equity of the future judgment.~~***

The decision of the Judge will be grounded entirely on our works. No man who was righteous in this world, shall perish; nor shall any man who persisted in his wickedness, be saved. The reward indeed that will be given to the righteous, will be the gift of grace for Christ's sake; whereas that which will be given to the wicked, will be the just wages of their iniquity! [Romans 6:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.23).

Still however, the quality of every person's works will determine his state; and the happiness or misery of each will be proportioned to his improvement or abuse of the talents committed to him.

You all know, if you see one man industrious, sober, frugal; and another man idle, dissipated, extravagant—what must in process of time be the difference between them. Each of them is laying up for himself a treasure which in due season he must reap; nor are you at all surprised when you see the one enjoying the fruits of his industry, and the other reaping the bitter fruits of his folly!

Such will assuredly be the outcome of our conduct in reference to religion. Let every person therefore remember, that he is daily and hourly treasuring up for himself that which shall be delivered to him again at the day of judgment, [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8); and that, if he perishes forever, he will have none to blame for it but himself!

***~~2. The importance of preparing for our great account.~~***

If the declarations in the text proceeded from *man*, they might well be disregarded. But they are the words of *God*; and are as truly spoken to us by him, as if they were now uttered by an audible voice from Heaven. Should we not then take warning? Should not the wicked inquire how they may become righteous; and the righteous increase their diligence to hold on in God's holy ways? Would to God this effect might now be produced! Wow gladly would we set Christ before you as an all-sufficient Savior! and how joyfully would we proclaim the promises of God, both to sincere penitents, [Isaiah 55:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.7), and to humble believers, [Job 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 17.9). Let all stir themselves up without delay, and prepare in earnest to meet their God!

In the world, we may pass days and years, and never once hear the sentiment, That "it shall go ill with the wicked." On the contrary, we shall hear ten thousand assertions that encourage a directly opposite opinion. And, if a friendly monitor attempts to undeceive us, he is accounted rude, harsh, fanatical. But in the house of God we may venture to speak with plainness, and to declare the determinations of Heaven.

*God sends us for this very purpose, that we may draw aside the veil of futurity, and open to your view the things that shall be hereafter.*We are to show you "the righteous shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," and the wicked "lifting up their eyes with unavailing wishes in the torments of Hell!"

***~~#863~~***

***~~GOD THE PROTECTOR OF HIS CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 4.5)~~***

"The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud, and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defense." KJV

"Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy." NIV

The redeemed Church of God is frequently represented as hated both by men and devils, and exposed to their united assaults. But it is protected by an invisible and almighty Agent, who keeps it alive, as a spark in the midst of a tempestuous ocean. His watchful eye is ever over it for good; He considers it as his glory, and will therefore himself be its defense.

This is promised to the redeemed Church in the words before us; in which we are told,

**I. The redeemed Church is God's glory.**

Mount Zion is a name given to the Gospel Church, [Hebrews 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.22); and a strict attention to the text will show, that it is here considered as "the glory" of God. Its members also are expressly designated by God himself, [Isaiah 46:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.13).

***~~1. The various "dwelling-places of Mount Zion" are his glory.~~***

Wherever Christianity has gained its full ascendant over any family, God will most assuredly be worshiped and served by every member of it. The master will say with Joshua, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord!" and, in order to carry this resolution into effect, he will, like Abraham, command his children, and his household after him, [Joshua 24:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 24.15). [Genesis 18:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.19). His house will be a temple in which he himself officiates as priest; and, as far as he can prevail, he will cause every heart to be an altar to the Lord, that they may daily offer to him the sacrifices of prayer and praise. Such a family will be like a beautiful garden, filled with "trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified, [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3);" and while God calls himself "their God," he will dignify them with the exalted appellation of "his people," and "his servants in whom he will be glorified! [Jeremiah 31:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.1). [Isaiah 49:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.3)."

***~~2. The "assemblies of Mount Zion" also are his glory.~~***

As the Israelites came up thrice every year to worship God at Jerusalem, so on every Sabbath do his people assemble for the exercise of social and public worship. In those holy convocations does every one speak of his glory, [Psalm 29:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 29.9); and his ministers in particular, who are "the glory of Christ, [2 Corinthians 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.23)," proclaim the riches of his grace and mercy. In these, God grants his more peculiar presence; for "he loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, [Psalm 87:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.2)." "He comes down as in the days of old, [Exodus 40:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 40.34-35). [2 Chronicles 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 7.1), and fills the place with his glory;" he pours out his Spirit in a more abundant measure; and by communicating the blessings of grace and peace, he "glorifies the house of his glory, [Isaiah 60:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.7)."

While they are thus highly esteemed by God, they are favored with his peculiar care; for,

***~~II. God is his redeemed Church's guardian.~~***

The Israelites, when coming out of Egypt, had a cloud with them as a symbol of the Divine presence, [Exodus 13:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 13.21-22). [Nehemiah 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.19). This was intended both to guide them in their journeys, and to protect them from their enemies.

***~~1. God promises to his redeemed Church to be her guide.~~***

The cloud went before the people in all their journeys, moving or resting when it was proper for them to move or rest, [Exodus 40:34-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 40.34-38). Thus will God direct the concerns of his redeemed Church. Though he will not interpose in the same visible manner—yet he will manifest the same attention to its interests, and guide it with the same unerring hand. Nor is it to the Church at large only, that God extends his care; he will regard "the dwelling-places of Mount Zion" no less than "her assemblies;" and consult the welfare of the lowest individual as much as of the largest community, [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2).

Does anyone look up to him for direction? He says, "The meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way, [Psalm 25:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.9)." "He shall have an anointing of the Holy One that shall teach him all things! [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20)." So plainly shall his path be marked, that, "though a fool, he shall not err therein! [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8)."

Is he involved in any peculiar difficulty? He shall hear a voice behind him, saying, "This is the way, walk in it! [Isaiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.21)." And though his path may often appear dubious—yet he shall find at last that he has been "led in the right way to the city of habitation! [Psalm 107:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.7)."

***~~2. God promises to his redeemed Church to be her defense.~~***

The cloud on one occasion went behind the Israelites, and wore a dark and threatening aspect to their enemies, while it gave light to them, [Exodus 14:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.19-20). In the same way, will God give salvation for walls and bulwarks to his Church, [Isaiah 26:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.1). No weapon that is formed against it shall prosper, [Isaiah 54:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.17). God will not only go before it, but protect back end, [Isaiah 58:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.8). Nor shall the gates of Hell ever prevail against it, [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18). Never for one moment will he intermit his care, [Isaiah 27:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.3). His protection shall be as effectual as that of lofty mountains, [Psalm 125:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.2), or an impassable river, [Isaiah 33:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.21), or a wall of fire, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5). And its preservation shall be seen to be evidently his work, as much as the "creation" itself; so that all who behold it shall say, This has God wrought! [Job 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 12.9). [Isaiah 41:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.4).

***~~3. God promises to his redeemed Church to be her glory.~~***

It was the presence of God with Israel of old that marked them as his special people. They were feared on this account, so that "all the inhabitants of Canaan melted because of them, [Joshua 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 2.9); [Joshua 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 2.11)," as also terror was diffused through the whole camp of the Philistines, [1 Samuel 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 4.7). Thus it is with the redeemed Church at this time; it is the presence of God in it that renders it the joy of the whole earth, [Psalm 48:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 48.2). It is God's glory that is seen upon it, which brings kings to the brightness of its rising, [Isaiah 60:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1-3). There is often a power in the ordinances that evidences the presence of God, and constrains his most inveterate enemies to submit themselves to him, and to unite themselves to his redeemed Church, [1 Corinthians 14:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.25). And it will be in consequence of that more abundant manifestation of his presence, which shall be given to the redeemed Church at a future period, that all the nations of the earth shall seek with eagerness a saving interest in its privileges, and a participation of its blessings, [Zechariah 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.23). People of all ranks, from the lofty "fir-tree" to the humble "box-tree," shall come together to the redeemed Church, of which it will be said, "The Lord is your everlasting light, and your God your glory! [Isaiah 60:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.13-16); [Isaiah 60:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.16)."

***~~To improve this subject, let me entreat you,~~***

***~~1. To give yourselves up to God as his people.~~***

The whole of this subject refers, as you have seen, to Israel as God's people. To such alone were these promises made; and by such alone were they experienced. To the Egyptians the cloud was as darkness, while to the Israelites it was a pillar of light; and the sea, which afforded to Israel a path of safety, was to the Egyptians without exception a fatal grave.

In the same way, only to those who give up themselves to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are the blessings of redemption fully known; to them the Gospel is "a savor of life unto life, while to others it is only a savor of death unto death;" to them is Christ a sanctuary, while to others he is only a stumbling-block and a rock of of offence."

What then shall I say unto you? This I will say: Imitate the Israelites on the occasion referred to. Cast off your bonds, and put yourselves under the guidance of "that Prophet, whom Jehovah has raised up unto you, like unto Moses." Go forth from Egypt in dependence on your God; rely upon him for everything during the time of your sojourning in this dreary wilderness; and look forward to your possession of the promised land as your sure and abiding portion. "Follow the Lord fully!" as Joshua and Caleb did; and rest assured that, like them, you shall in due season enjoy the promised inheritance!

***~~2. To glory in God as your God.~~***

Tell me one promise that ever failed those who trusted fully in their God. If Joshua, after forty years of conflict, could make this a matter of appeal to Israel—then be sure that none of you shall ever be disappointed of your hope. With Jehovah for your guide and defense, you have no ground for fear; for "if God is for you, then who can be against you?" Your enemies may be great in might, and many in number; but "they are all but bread for you." In your conflicts with them, you may endure much; but your trials shall be only as "the spirit of judgment and of burning to purge and to purify you from your filth, verse 4," and to call forth those exertions from God, which he has promised to you. Whatever difficulty obstructs your way, say to it as God has taught you, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!" Only "be strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Only hold fast your confidence, and the rejoicing of your hope;" and "not so much as one jot or tittle of God's Word shall ever fail!"

***~~#864~~***

***~~GOD'S APPEAL TO MAN'S DECISION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 5:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.3-5)~~***

"O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I beg you, between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard." KJV

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled!" NIV

Mercies received, are obligations to obedience, and aggravations of the guilt of disobedience. This is declined under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard. The parable in the text foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Our Lord applied it in reference to the approaching dissolution of their ecclesiastical and civil polity by the Romans, [Matthew 21:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.33); [Matthew 21:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.41); [Matthew 21:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.45).

It is applicable also to the Church of God in all ages. In this solemn address of God to his redeemed Church and people are contained,

***~~I. His appeal to them.~~***

***~~Many and great are the temporal blessings which we enjoy.~~***

In our civil capacity, we possess civil and religious liberty.

In our socialrelations, our privileges and comforts are many.

In our personalconcerns, we may all find abundant cause for gratitude.

***~~But our spiritual advantages are greater still.~~***

We have infallible directions respecting the way of salvation, [John 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.9); [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6). [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11). [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12). We are urged by the strongest motives to walk in it. Not only our hopes and fears, which are the grand springs of human activity and vigor, are excited, [Romans 2:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.6-10), but the love of Christ is set before us as the most irresistible of all motives, [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14). Sufficient assistance also is provided for us, [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13). Every Christian may adopt the apostle's words, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13).

We have the religion of Christ established in the land. The Church of England has been "the pillar and ground of the truth" ever since the reformation. Its liturgy is pure and scriptural; its articles and homilies are a barrier against the intrusion of error; and, were its institutions observed as they ought to be, there would be no minister in its communion who was not orthodox in his opinions and holy in his life; none could undertake the office of a teacher, who was not himself taught of God, and "moved by the Holy Spirit."

In the name of God then, we call you to judge between God and your own souls, "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard!" [Isaiah 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.3).

What obstructions to our fruitfulness has he not removed?

What means of promoting it has he not employed?

Could Catholic superstition obscure the light? Its clouds have been dispelled by the revival of Scriptural knowledge.

Could prejudice pervert our judgment? A liberality of sentiment prevails beyond the example of former ages.

Could guilt dismay our hearts? God has sent his own Son to die for us.

Could a sense of our weakness discourage us? God has promised the aid of his Spirit.

Could persecution alarm our fears? "Every one now sits under his own vine and fig-tree."

Could erroneous teachers misguide us? Care has been taken, as far as human foresight could prevail, to exclude them.

What, then, has not God done that could be done? We appeal to you, and make you judges in your own cause.

Happy were it for us, if, while we reflect on the advantages God has favored us with, which are greater far than those which were enjoyed by his people of old—there were not the same reason as formerly for,

***~~II. His expostulation with them.~~***

***~~The fruit which God requires is suitable to the pains he has bestowed upon us.~~***

He expects that we follow his directions, and live by faith in his dear Son, and that we feel the influence of the motives he has set before us, and, that we go forth against all the enemies of our souls in a humble dependence on his promised aid.

***~~But very different is the fruit which the greater part of us have brought forth.~~***

We have substituted in the place of Christ, some self-righteous methods of acceptance with God.

We have been actuated chiefly by earthly, carnal, and selfish principles.

We have gone on in the strength of our own resolutions, instead of looking up continually for the assistance of the Spirit.

Alas! our fruit has been only as "the grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah!"

How great the difference between him who produces good fruit, and him who "brings forth only wild grapes!"

The one makes Christ all his salvation and all his desire; the other exalts himself into the place of Christ, and wishes to become, in part at least, his own Savior.

The one regards eternal things us a reality; the other is scarcely more affected by them than if they were a fiction.

The one conquers sin and Satan in the strength of Christ; the other is, either openly or secretly, led captive by them both.

In a word, the one is a compound of humility, heavenly-mindedness, and zeal; and the other of pride, worldliness, and indifference!

But that God is displeased with our unprofitableness, will appear from,

***~~III. His threat.~~***

Under the figure of "laying waste" a vineyard, verses 5-6, God warns us what he will do to us if we continue unprofitable servants:

***~~1. He will bestow no more pains upon us.~~***

He who by "pruning and digging" has labored incessantly for our good, will abandon us at last to our own hearts' lusts! [Hosea 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 4.17). [Psalm 81:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.11-12). He who has "commanded the clouds to rain down rain upon us," will cease to guard us by his providence, or assist us by his grace! [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3).

***~~2. He will withdraw the advantages we now enjoy.~~***

He will "take away the lampstand" when we exclude or abuse the light, [Luke 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.18). [Revelation 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.5). Or if he does not cause "a famine of the word," he will make his Gospel "a savor of death to us rather than of life! [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.16)."

***~~3. He will expose us to the heaviest calamities.~~***

We may easily conceive how the wild boar of the field will desolate a vineyard, when its fences are all removed;" and we know, from the instances of Peter and of Judas, what Satan will effect, if he is allowed to execute his will upon us! Yet we can expect nothing but to be "delivered over to Satan for the destruction both of our bodies and souls," if we "bring forth only wild grapes" after all the culture bestowed upon us! [Hebrews 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7-8). [Luke 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.7), and [John 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.6).

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

***~~What reason have we all to be ashamed of our unfruitfulness, and to tremble lest God should execute upon us his threatened vengeance!~~***

No words can more forcibly express his fixed determination to execute it, than the concluding words of our text. Let us be thankful that the execution of it has been so long delayed; let the "forbearance exercised towards us, lead us to repentance, [Romans 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.4);" and let us henceforth seek to resemble the primitive Christians, [Romans 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.22).

And what reason can be assigned that shall justify our bringing forth only "wild grapes" under such circumstances?

Has there been any lack of care on the part of the gardener?

Has there been anything defective in the means he has used?

Could he, consistently with his plans of government, have done more for us than he has done?

Can we at all excuse ourselves, and cast with propriety the blame on him?

You judge whether the fault is not entirely in yourselves?

***~~#865~~***

***~~THE SINFULNESS OF CONFOUNDING GOOD AND EVIL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.20)~~***

"Woe to those . . .  
 who call evil good, and good evil,  
 who put darkness for light, and light for darkness,  
 who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

That man in his present state is a corrupt and sinful creature, is too plain to be denied; the whole tenor of his conduct proves it beyond a doubt. But *the generality give themselves credit for meaning well at the very time that they are doing ill*. In this, however, they are mistaken. There is in all a far greater consciousness of the evil of their conduct than they are willing to allow. But they wish to quiet their own minds, and to approve themselves to the world; and therefore they change the names of things, "calling good evil, and evil good, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

By these means they succeed in allaying their own fears, and in commending themselves to each other; but their guilt before God is thereby greatly increased; for our Lord says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

***~~There is in their hearts a rooted aversion to what is good, and a consequent determination to condemn it.~~***

***~~There is also an inveterate love of evil, and a consequent desire to justify it.~~***

Hence arises that conduct which is so justly reprobated in the text; the prevalence and evil of which we shall proceed to lay before you.

We will endeavor to point out:

***~~I. The prevalence of this conduct.~~***

The more we examine the principles and actions of men, the more shall we find that this system prevails among them both in theory and practice.

**1. Inspect their VIEWS of true religion**.

**It will appear that they consider it as a superficial thing**, consisting in a bare assent to certain notions, and a formal observance of certain rites. If they have been baptized in their infancy; if they have some general views of Christianity, together with a persuasion of its divine authority; if they attend regularly on public worship, and occasionally partake the Lord's supper; and finally, if they are not guilty of any gross and scandalous violations of their duty, they think they have all the religion that they need.

But they substitute the shadow for the substance. True religion is widely different from this!

It is a conversion of the soul to God;  
it is a resurrection from the dead;  
it is a new creation.

True religion, as it exists in the soul, is a heaven-born principle that pervades all its powers, and operates in all its faculties.

It is to the soul what the soul is to the body.

It restrains our passions, corrects our appetites, purifies our affections.

It enters into all our motives, and subjects everything to itself.

It will endure no rival; it will make a truce with no enemy; it will reign over the whole man.

Its avowed object is to bring man to God as a redeemed sinner, and to restore him to a fitness for that inheritance which he has forfeited by his transgressions. In order to accomplish this, it casts down every high and towering imagination, brings its votary to the foot of the cross, constrains him to walk in the steps of his divine Master, and progressively transforms him into the image of his God.

Compare this with the slight and worthless thing which men in general call religion, and it will appear that they use the term without any just apprehension of its true import.

**Again, as true religion is esteemed a superficial thing, so it is also deemed a melancholy thing.**

When true religion is described, the generality of men are ready to exclaim against it as incompatible with social happiness; 'If we must repent of our past sins, and enter on a course of mortification and self-denial; if we must renounce the pleasures of sin, and the society of the ungodly; if we must continually think of death and judgment, and spend our lives in preparation for eternity; what remains for us in this world but gloom and melancholy?' So they think.

But is this the light in which the Scriptures speak of religion? Or are these notions justified by experience? We allow the premises to be correct; but is the conclusion just? Suppose for a moment that the whole life of a person who appeared religious, were a scene of melancholy; must that melancholy be imputed to religion? Must it not rather be imputed to his former wickedness, and to his present lack of more religion? If pain arise to the body during the cure of an inveterate disorder, is that pain to be imputed to the medicine, or the disease? To the disease, no doubt.

In the same way therefore, must be ascribed all the pain of sorrow and contrition, even supposing it to be ever so great, and ever so long continued. As for religion itself, we need only ascertain what it is, and we shall immediately see the absurdity of calling it a source of misery.

What! Is it melancholy to walk with God, to enjoy God, to glorify God? Was our Lord melancholy? Were his Apostles melancholy? Are the angels in Heaven melancholy? Then shall we be melancholy in proportion as we resemble them!

But if "the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and peace," and they who believe in Christ be privileged to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—then are they perverse who deem religion melancholy, "they call evil good, and good evil, they put darkness for light, and light for darkness, they put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

**To complete their perverseness, men go farther still, and actually represent religion as a contemptible thing.**What is there under the sun more despised than this? With what opprobrium has it not been stigmatized? We appeal to all, whether terms of reproach are not universally assigned to religious characters, and whether the names given them do not universally convey the idea of a weak contemptible enthusiast? Is not their very profession considered as a just bar to their advancement? Yes, are they not so odious in the eyes of the world, that none but those infected with their mania will venture to associate with them, or to acknowledge them as their friends? The drunkard, the whoremonger, the Sabbath-breaker, the infidel—shall find a more favorable reception than they; and solely on account of their religion.

But does true religion deserve this character? What is there in it that is so contemptible? What is there in it that to an impartial judge would not appear lovely, great, and venerable?

Is the subjugation of the passions a contemptible attainment?

Is a superiority to all the pleasures of sense, and the interests of the world, a worthless acquisition!

Is there anything base in love to God, and benevolence to man?

Is the aspiring after Heaven a low and pitiful ambition?

Viewing at a distance the conduct of the Apostles, we call it magnanimity; but when we see it exhibited before our eyes, we call it preciseness, enthusiasm, and hypocrisy. Ah! when will men "cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord," and to brand that with infamy, which he prescribes and approves?

***~~2. Hitherto we have noticed only men's conduct in respect of theory; let us now behold it as it is manifest in their PRACTICE.~~***

***~~In the first place they magnify the pursuits of time beyond all reasonable bounds.~~***

From our earliest infancy we hear of little but getting forward in the world. To be rich, to be great, to be honorable—this is the chief good of man. All are aspiring after a higher place than they possess, and conceive that they shall catch *the phantom of happiness*when they have reached a certain point.

Moreover, all are applauded in proportion us they succeed in this race; and no period but that of their departure from the body is thought a fit season for prosecuting their eternal interests.

But are the *concerns of time*really of such importance? When we have got forward in the world, what have we more than food and clothing, which we might have possessed with half the trouble! We do not mean to discourage industry; that is truly befitting in every person, and highly advantageous in every state. But if all our time and labor are occupied about this world, and the concerns of the soul are subordinated to those of the body, then is our conduct precisely such as is reprobated in the text.

***~~In the next place, men extenuate sin as trivial.~~***

There are some crimes which degrade human nature, or greatly disturb the happiness of society, which are therefore very generally reprobated and abhorred. But a forgetfulness of God, a neglect of Christ, a resistance of the Holy Spirit, an indifference about the soul, with ten thousand other sins of omission or of commission—are considered as light and trivial, and as affording no ground for sorrow and contrition. If only the outward conduct have been decent, it is no matter what has been harbored within the heart, or how much God has been disregarded and despised.

But is this the light in which the Scriptures teach us to regard sin?

What was it that cast angels out of Heaven? The sin of pride!

What drove our first parents from Paradise, and brought a curse on all their posterity? One single transgression; and that a breach, not so much of a moral precept, as of a positive institution!

Whom is it that according to God's declaration, he will cast into Hell? "The wicked, and all the nations that forget God!"

Does sin appear a light matter when we are told that nothing but the sacrifice of the Son of God could make atonement for it?

Or will it appear a light matter to ourselves, when we are suffering the vengeance due to our sins, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone?

Surely, they are "fools who mock at sin," and blind, who doubt of its malignity.

**To adduce only one instance more, they foolishly persuade themselves that their eternal state is safe!**

Men living in a direct violation of God's commandments, and in a perfect contrast with the example of Christ, imagine that they have nothing to fear, "they have done no harm; and God is very merciful; and if they were to perish, then what must become of all the world?" These, and such like arguments, are considered as sufficient to invalidate every word that God has spoken, and to justify their hopes of eternal happiness.

But darkness and light are not more opposite than these opinions are to the declarations of God! Where will they find one single passage that will warrant such expectations as these? They must indeed make "evil good, and good evil; and must change bitter to sweet, and sweet to bitter," before they can have the smallest ground of hope in such a state as theirs!

We might easily prosecute this subject in a great variety of views; but enough has been spoken to elucidate the words before us; and we trust that no doubt can remain upon your minds, but that all who consider religion as *superficial*, *melancholy*, or *contemptible*, together with all who magnify the pursuits of time, and extenuate sin as trivial, and at the same time persuade themselves that their eternal state is safe—are indeed liable to the censure in the text.

We shall pass on therefore to show,

***~~II. The evil of this conduct.~~***

But where shall we find words sufficient to declare its great enormity?

***~~1. It is in the first place, a contemptuous rejection of God's truth.~~***

God has clearly marked the difference between good and evil in his Word; and if the eyes of our understanding be not blinded by prejudice or passion, we may discern it as easily as we can discern by our bodily senses, light from darkness, or sweet from bitter.

But when an appeal is made to the sacred records, their testimony is considered as of no account. Who has not seen the contempt with which God's Word is treated, when it is brought forward to oppose some fashionable practice, or some favorite lust? One would suppose that its import should be candidly examined, and carefully ascertained. One might expect that they who heard it, should act like mariners at sea, sailing by the compass; that they would endeavor to proceed, us much as possible, in the right direction; that they would deliberate, if at any time they had reason to think that they were out of their proper course; that they would be thankful for any information that might tend to rectify their mistakes; above all, they would not madly steer in direct opposition to the compass, and at the same time discard all doubts about their safe arrival at the place of their destination; that would be a folly of which no man in his senses is capable.

Yet this is the very manner in which men act with respect to the Scriptures! There is no other *compass*or *directory*for the soul than the Scriptures; and yet they will not only not follow it, but will go on in willful opposition to it, and still affirm that they are in the way to Heaven! Do we speak too harshly of this conduct if we call it a contempt of God's truth? It is the very expression used by our Lord himself, "He who hears you, hears me; and he who despises you, despises me; and he who despises me, despises him who sent me."

Indeed, the inspired writers speak in yet severer terms; they do not hesitate to affirm, that whoever acts thus, makes God to be a liar, "he who believes not God, has made him a liar." What horrible iniquity is this!

If an *avowed infidel*disregard the admonitions of the Scriptures, he acts consistently, because he does not acknowledge them to be of divine-authority. But if *we*despise them, we who profess to regard them as inspired of God, we who expect to be judged according to them in the last day, what can be said in extenuation of our guilt? Even "Sodom and Gomorrah may well rise up in judgment against us!"

***~~2. In the next place their conduct is a willful deluding of those around them.~~***

Every man, whether he designs it or not, has a considerable influence on his friends and neighbors. The rich and learned in particular, and more especially those who minister in holy things, are looked up to as examples; and their conduct is pleaded both as a precedent, and as a justification of those who follow it.

'Can such learned men be deceived? Can they who have entered into the service of the sanctuary, and solemnly undertaken to guide us in the way of peace, can they be wrong? Can they be blind, who are leaders of the blind? If then those who from their education, their office and profession, ought to understand the Scriptures better than we; if *these*do not approve, either in theory or practice, the things which appear to be enjoined in the Bible, surely they have good reasons for their conduct; they would not proceed in a way which they knew to be wrong; we therefore may safely follow them!'

By this mode of arguing, all people lull themselves asleep in their evil ways. Every one upholds his neighbor in the opinions he has embraced, and in the path he has marked out for himself; and all, instead of condemning themselves for not obeying the divine commands, unite in condemning the obedient as needlessly singular and precise!

Now we cannot but know that, though an individual has not this extensive influence, the collective body of individuals has; and that every member of society contributes his share according to the conspicuousness of his station, and the sanctity of his profession. *Yet we persist in calling good evil, notwithstanding we know that, by so doing, we encourage others to do the same*. And is this no aggravation of our guilt? Are we not responsible to God for stirring up, according to our ability, a universal rebellion against him; and for contributing thus to the eternal condemnation, not of those only with whom we associate, but of thousands also whom we have not known!

Doubtless Jeroboam contracted peculiar guilt in "establishing iniquity by a law;" but did not exceeding great guilt attach also to those, who "willingly ran after his commandment!" Did not every one of them approve idolatry, and render an adherence to the true God more difficult! They however might plead obedience to an established law; but there is no law, except *the imperious law of custom*, to mislead us; and that we establish, while we follow it; we bind others, while we ourselves yield obedience to it. Would to God that men could consider their conduct in this view, as discouraging, and perhaps turning aside, the weak; as rendering odious the godly; and as hardening the wicked! Surely they would not then say, 'What harm have I done?' but would be ready to confess themselves the very chief of sinners.

***~~III. Lastly, the confounding of good and evil is a solemn trifling with our eternal state.~~***

We profess to believe that there is "a day appointed of God, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained;" and that "every one of us shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they have been good or evil!"

Now *in that day we shall not be judged by the opinions of men, but by the Word of God*. It will be no excuse to anyone that such or such maxims were generally received, or that such practices were sanctioned by custom; there will be one standard to which every principle and every action will be referred. The sacred volume will be open before the Judge; and every erroneous sentiment be confronted with the dictates of inspiration. The Judge himself will know no other rule of judgment; everything that accorded with the Scriptures will be approved; and everything that contradicted them will be condemned.

To what end then is it to impose *subtle names*on things, when they will so soon appear in their true light? Will *God*call evil good, and good evil, because *we*have done so? Can we convince him that light was darkness, and darkness light, because we persuaded ourselves and others that it was so? What infatuation is it so to trifle with our eternal state! If our error could be pleaded before God in extenuation of our fault, then indeed we might have some reason for persisting in it; but how can we excuse ourselves before him, when we had the means of information in our hands, and followed our own surmises in preference to his commands?

Let us then remember that we are acting now for eternity; and that in a little time everything will appear, not as we wish it, but as it really is! And, if we think it of any importance what our condition shall be in the invisible world, let us desist from our self-deception, which, however pleasant or fashionable it may be, will most unquestionably issue in our eternal ruin!

***~~Before I conclude, allow me to address a word of EXHORTATION. both to those who are deceiving their own souls, and to those who desire to regulate their conduct according to truth.~~***

***~~1. To those who are deceiving their own souls.~~***

I beg permission to propose one solemn question; God has said, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

Can you change that woe into a blessing! Can you prevail on God to retract his Word? Can you make void that sentence, when God shall come to execute it upon you in the last day? Yes, will you not then curse your folly, for using such pains to deceive yourselves and others, and for involving yourselves in everlasting misery, when, if you had not so "rebelled against the light," you might have been heirs of everlasting glory?

Permit me then to address you in the words of the Apostle, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light!" Begin to weigh both opinions and actions in the balance of the sanctuary. Begin to "judge righteous judgment." Begin to view things, as you will surely view them when you shall stand at the tribunal of Christ.

Bear in mind, that in your present state God has denounced a woe against you. Remember too, that it will be small consolation to you to have others involved in the same misery with yourselves; it will rather be a source of more intense misery to all, by reason of their mutual execrations, for having so greatly contributed to each other's ruin!

If the Word of God is intended for "a light to our feet, and a lantern to our paths," then make use of it; study it, as it were, upon your knees; meditate upon it day and night; and beg of God "to open your understandings that you may *understand*it," and to sanctify your hearts that you may *obey*it.

***~~2. To those who desire to regulate their conduct according to Scriptures.~~***

Be strong, and *dare to stem the torrent of iniquity*, that would bear down all before it. Do not be ashamed to call good and evil by their proper names; and to show by the whole tenor of your lives, that you know how to distinguish them. Do not let too great a weight be given to the opinions of men. Bow not to the authority of fashion and custom; but "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." Bring your advisers to "the law and to the testimony; for if they speak not according to that, there is no light in them." When men presume to think for you in the concerns of your souls, it is high time to inquire, whether they will also perish for you? If you perish, you must perish for yourselves; and therefore it behooves you to think for yourselves, and to act for yourselves. The *self-deceiving world*cannot remove the woe from their own souls; much less can they from yours. "Walk not then according to the course of this world!" "Do not follow not a multitude to do evil!"

Look not at your neighbors, but at Christ and his holy Apostles. Let the Scriptures regulate your every sentiment, and your every act. And, without concerning yourselves about the misrepresentations which blind and ungodly men will give of your conduct, "be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!"

***~~#866~~***

***~~ISAIAH'S VISION OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 6:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.5-7)~~***

KJV "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of impure lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of impure lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

NIV. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Previous to the full revelation of himself in the Gospel, God was pleased to communicate his mind and will to men by dreams and visions, which, since the completion of the sacred canon, are no longer to be expected. But we must not therefore imagine that the revelations so made are less interesting to us, than those which proceeded more immediately from the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit. The same importance must be attached to everything which God has spoken, so far at least as the instruction which is intended to be conveyed is itself important. For instance, *the vision of Isaiah seems to have been a peculiar favor given to him; but still it contains many instructive lessons for us*; and in this two-fold view we will consider it,

***~~I. As a peculiar favor given to him.~~***

That we may have a more distinct view of it, we shall notice in succession,

***~~1. The vision given.~~***

The place where the prophet was supposed to be, was the outer court of the temple; from whence, the veil which separated it from the sanctuary being drawn aside, he beheld Jehovah seated on his throne, and his train, like that of eastern monarchs, filling the temple. Had no additional light been cast on this vision in the New Testament, we would not have thought of inquiring more minutely about the glorious object whom he saw, and who is here so repeatedly designated by titles peculiar to the one supreme God; but we are authorized to declare, that the person whom he saw, was the Lord Jesus Christ, even our "Immanuel, God with us! "Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him! [John 12:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.41)."

Around the throne were "the seraphim," the holy angels, like flames of fire, [Psalm 104:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 104.4), in a posture of devout adoration. Each of them had six wings; with two of which he covered his face, as unworthy to behold God; and with the other two, his feet, as unworthy to serve him; while with the remaining two he flew with all possible activity to fulfill his will. In themselves they were perfect and spotless creatures; yet, conscious of being as nothing in the sight of a pure and holy God, they were filled with profoundest awe, and served him with reverential fear!

In their worship of him they celebrated, in alternate and responsive songs, the holiness of his nature, and the wonders of his grace. Whether, in the repetition of the word "holy," there is any reference, as some have thought, to the Three Persons of the Godhead, we undertake not to determine; but they evidently regarded the holiness of God as that attribute, which constitutes the glory and perfection of all the rest; and indeed it is that attribute in which he is more especially glorious, [Exodus 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.11), and at the remembrance of which the whole universe should give thanks, [Psalm 30:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.4).

Together with this glorious subject they evidently combined the wonders of redeeming love. It is in that view alone that "the earth" can be said to be "full of his glory." In the whole creation indeed there is a marvelous display of wisdom and power; but *in redemption alone are seen the mercy, and truth, and faithfulness of our God*. And though the seraphims are not savingly interested in that work as we are—yet, as exhibiting the full radiance of all the divine perfections in united splendor, they admire it, they sing of it, they, glorify the Lord Jesus on account of it! Compare [Psalm 72:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.17-19), where the same person is spoken of, and the some subject pursued.

At the sound of their voices the doors of the temple were shaken, and the house was filled with smoke. It is possible that this was designed to express the approbation of God, and his delight in that work which was the subject of their praise, [2 Chronicles 5:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 5.13-14); [2 Chronicles 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 6.1). But we rather suppose, that it was intended to intimate the future abolition of the temple worship, when the time should have arrived for the complete establishment of the Christian dispensation, [Amos 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.1) with [Hebrews 12:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.27).

***~~2. The fear excited.~~***

In all the manifestations of God to men, the sight of his majesty has excited alarm and terror! [Judges 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 13.22). [Daniel 10:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 10.6-8). [Revelation 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.17). A measure of this feeling we behold in the prophet on this occasion.

But together with this, there was also a deep sense of humiliation and contrition. As Job, on a similar occasion, was led to exclaim, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes, [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.6)," so the prophet, viewing himself, and all around him, in the light of God's holiness, accounted himself a leper in the midst of a leprous world. Whatever he might have judged of himself before, he now was speechless; as indeed every human being must be in the presence of a holy God, [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19); since "we are all as an impure thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags! [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6)." From the apprehension and terror we are freed by the Gospel; but the humiliation and self-abasement should rather increase in proportion to the more exalted privileges we enjoy, [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.63).

***~~3. The consolation administered.~~***

Instantly did one of the seraphim fly to him, to declare, that his iniquities were all blotted out as a morning cloud, through the sin-atoning blood of Christ. This was emblematically represented to him by a coal taken from off the altar of burnt-offering, and applied to his lips. Doubtless the performance of this office was a delightful service to the Seraph, who would willingly forego for a season the more immediate vision of God himself, for the honor of executing his will as a messenger of mercy to sinful man.

But we hasten from this more restricted view of the subject, to consider it,

***~~II. As an instructive lesson to us.~~***

While we acknowledge that such visions are not to be expected by us, we may contemplate Isaiah's vision with great advantage to our souls.

***~~1. We may learn from Isaiah's vision, that a sight of Christ is the highest privilege we can enjoy!~~***

What is it that constitutes the felicity of Heaven? What is it that is the great source of happiness to the seraphim around the throne? It is a sight of Christ enthroned in his glory! Yet was that sight afforded to the prophet in a vision; and afterwards to Paul, by an immediate admission to it in Heaven.

And is there no such vision to be enjoyed by us? To our bodily eyes indeed there is not; nor to our imaginations will any such view of him be presented; but to the *eye of faith*the Lord Jesus is clearly visible; and the eyes of every believer may even now "behold the King in his beauty! [Isaiah 33:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.17)."

In the Gospel he is fully revealed to us; there he appears as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and we may "behold his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" We need not envy the prophet himself; for we may have even brighter views of Jesus than he ever enjoyed.

We are told that John was greater than all the prophets; and yet that "the least in the Kingdom of Heaven," that is under the Gospel dispensation, "is greater than he, [Luke 7:26-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.26-28)." How did he excel all others? Others prophesied of Christ; but he pointed him out, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of men!" And wherein do we excel him? He beheld Jesus when he came to accomplish our redemption; and *we behold him after its accomplishment, seated on his throne of glory, and actually applying to millions of his people the full benefits of that redemption*.

Let those who embrace the Gospel know their high privilege. Let the poor especially rejoice and be glad. It is not to human learning or to strength of intellect that this discovery of Christ is made, but to faith; and if we search the sacred records with a believing eye, then will "God shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!"

***~~2. We may learn from Isaiah's vision, that the more humble we are in our own eyes, the richer communications we shall receive from him.~~***

Behold how speedily the angel was sent to comfort the mind of the dejected prophet! This was a faithful representation of the care which Jesus takes of all his afflicted people, especially when humbled in the dust before him. "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until he brings forth judgment unto victory." Though he is "The High and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy—yet will he dwell with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, [Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.15); [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2)."

Does not his Word universally attest this blessed truth, that "while he who exalts himself shall be abased—the man that humbles himself shall be exalted?" Do not be afraid then, you who feel your own unworthiness; give not way to despondency; do not say, "Woe is me! I am undone!" Do not follow the unbelieving example of Peter, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord! [Luke 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 5.8)."

But know that, if you feel yourselves lost, it was precisely such people that he came to seek and save! [Luke 19:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.10); and that, "where sin has abounded, his grace shall much more abound! [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21);" and if, like Mary, you are enabled to go behind him, and wash his feet with your tears, he will before long say to you, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven!"

Indeed it is in this way that he is daily acting by the ministry of his Word; he sends his servant to take his promises, and apply them to the hearts and consciences of his people, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, and thus to fill them with "a peace that passes understanding," and with "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

**3.** **We may learn from Isaiah's vision, that a sense of his pardoning love should animate us to an unreserved surrender of ourselves to him!**

See the effect which was instantly produced on the prophet's mind. God designed to send his messages of love and mercy to the Jews, notwithstanding he knew beforehand that they would prove ineffectual for their conversion. To carry such messages was a painful task; but yet, when God asked, "Who will go for us?" the prophet hesitated not one moment to offer his services, saying, "Here am I, send me! verse 8."

Thus should we also manifest our gratitude to God for all the mercies given unto us through the Son of his love. We should not inquire whether His commands seem pleasant; or, whether our obedience will advance our credit in the world. It should be sufficient for us to know what the will of the Lord is; and then we should account it our honor to do, or suffer it.

Especially does this observation apply to those who minister in holy things; if God says, Who will go for me, to carry my Gospel to the heathen? we should not stand to inquire, Whether the office be lucrative or not; or, whether the climate to which we are to go be more or less healthy. No; we should stand forth and say, "Here am I, send me!" O that we all felt this holy zeal, and that we did not so lamentably "confer with flesh and blood," when, if called to it, we should leave even the vision of God himself, to execute his will towards sinful man!

In whatever line of life we move, we should be actuated by the same spirit; and so feel the constraining influence of Christ's love, as to live no longer to ourselves, but altogether unto Him who died for us, and rose again! [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15).

***~~#867~~***

***~~A MISSIONARY SPIRIT DESCRIBED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.8)~~***

"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." KJV

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" NIV

In former ages, God was well pleased to reveal his will to men, sometimes in dreams, and sometimes in visions, and sometimes by an audible voice, like that of a man conversing with his friend; and these methods were more especially given when he was about to devolve on them any particular office, or to employ them on any extraordinary service.

It was God's intention to send the Prophet Isaiah on a painful errand; such as, if he consulted his own feelings only, he would be very averse to execute. But to prepare him for it, God gave to him a vision of the glory and felicity of the heavenly world. The scene of the vision was, the temple, in which Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was worshiped. An assurance, at the same time, was given him of qualification for his work, and of acceptance in it; and by this he was brought to such a state, that, at the very first proposal from God to send a messenger to his people, he offered himself for the service, willing and desirous to undertake anything whereby his God might be honored, and his Savior glorified.

Respecting the vision itself, I forbear to speak. The points to which I shall call your attention are:

***~~I. The proposal made~~***

In the first instance, the proposal referred solely to a mission which God intended to send to his people. And, in this view, it may justly be applied to any call which may be given to undertake the ministry of the Gospel, either in our own country or in foreign parts.

But we may consider the call as given to every one of us, not to undertake the office of the ministry, but to serve God in a way of general obedience, "Who is willing to fulfill my will, and to consecrate himself to me?" This honor God is ready to confer on all who are willing to accept it; and, if we are really desirous to engage in His service, he will make us lights in the world, and monitors to all around us.

Such offers as these are common in the Holy Scriptures; and we may suppose it as now made to us, in the name, and by the command, of God himself.

To the proposal so made, let us consider,

**II. The answer given.**

This also we may regard, in the first instance, as an acceptance of the prophetic office. And we cannot but admire the conduct of Isaiah in relation to it, when he offered himself to God without hesitation and without reserve. Here were no inquiries made of what the particular office was, or what would be the difficulties attending the execution of it. It was sufficient for this holy man that he should be employed in doing the will of God; and he was willing to devote to that service all his faculties and all his powers.

But, taking the proposal as made to us in general to serve our God, we may here see what a spirit we should cultivate.

***~~1. We should offer ourselves to God to serve him instantly!~~***

There should be no delay; no looking for a more convenient season. We should not be questioning, whether we shall be able to do all that is required of us; but should expect assuredly, that God will enable us to perform whatever we undertake for him, and will give a successful outcome to our endeavors.

**2.** **We should offer ourselves to God to serve him without reserve!**

We should not draw back from any labor, nor hesitate to make any sacrifice. The loss of life itself should be regarded as no loss, yes, rather as a gain, in such a cause. To live for God, or die for God, should be deemed equally desirable, if only God's will may be done in us, and the Lord Jesus Christ be magnified! [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24). [Philippians 1:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20-21).

But the point to which I would more particularly draw your attention, is,

**III. The peculiar obligation which lies on us to follow the prophet's example.**

You will find in the vision that the prophet was favored with a bright manifestation of the glory of Christ; for John, referring to it, says, "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spoke of him, [John 12:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.41)," that is, of Christ. You will see, also, that assistance in his work was promised him; for the putting of the live coal upon his mouth seems to have been designed to assure him of it. Compare [Jeremiah 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 1.9) and [Acts 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.3). In addition to all this, a sense of God's pardoning love, through the Redeemer's sacrifice, was applied to his soul; for the live coal, being taken from the altar of burnt-offering, marked clearly the connection between the atonement offered for him, and the pardon given unto him. But in no respect do we fall short of the favors conferred on him; yes, rather, we may be considered as having:

***~~1. More glorious discoveries of Christ.~~***

Bright as that vision was, it was far inferior to that which is given to us in the Gospel. There we behold Christ as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, [Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.3)." Yes, we see all "the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ! [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)."

***~~2. More abundant communications of the Spirit.~~***

Whatever measures of grace were imparted to some highly-favored individuals under the Law, as to David, Isaiah, Daniel, and others, the effusions of the Holy Spirit were very small and partial in comparison with those which are given to the Christian Church; so that none of us need to draw back from the greatest work; since the weakest of true believers may say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me! Philip. 4:13."

***~~3. More certain assurances of the forgiveness of our sins.~~***

Doubtless the vision, and that one promise given him in it, were sufficient to satisfy his mind. But in the New Testament we have promises without number, "exceedingly great and precious promises;" so "great," that they comprehend every possible state that can be imagined; and so "precious," that they bring us into a participation of the divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4), and "fill us with all the fullness of God, [Ephesians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.19)."

I can have no hesitation in saying, that were an alternative offered to any true Christian, to receive for his comfort the personal, and particular promise that was given to the prophet, or to have given him for his dependence the broad and general promises of the New Testament, he would do well to rest on those broad promises, which engage that "all manner of sin shall he forgiven unto men," and that "all who believe shall be justified from all things!"

Say, then, whether we be not bound to imitate the prophet, in his surrender of himself to God?

Doubtless, if mercies given are motives to obedience, we, who have received such transcendent mercies, ought to "present our whole selves as living sacrifices unto God; which, as it is a holy and an acceptable, is also a most reasonable, service! [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

It may be proper, in conclusion, to reply to a question which will probably be asked:

***~~How shall I know whether any particular call to any special service is really from the Lord?~~***

I readily grant, that that is a point very difficult to be determined. There is no difficulty et all in determining that we are every one of us called to devote ourselves to God. The difficulty lies in reference to those particular acts which are required only of few. And here I must say, that no rules can be given which shall apply to all cases; nor perhaps any rules that shall be perfectly satisfactory to every mind. And probably, instead of giving a direct answer to the question, the best answer will be to suggest a caution against those workings of mind which render the full solution of the case so difficult.

Moses, we know, was called to go to Pharaoh, and to bring the Lord's people out of Egypt. Now, in opposition to this call, he urged his own unworthiness of such an office, [Exodus 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.11); the improbability of succeeding in his attempt, [Exodus 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.1); his own utter unfitness for the work assigned him, [Exodus 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.10);" and his desire that it should be transferred to someone else, [Exodus 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.13)." Nay, he further adduced his own experience of disappointment in less arduous labors, as a certain ground for apprehending that he must of necessity fail in a matter of so much greater difficulty, [Exodus 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 6.12). False humility will invariably suggest all of these excuses. But what were all these *objections*? They were, in truth, only so many *excuses*, urged to cover his own backwardness to undertake the work. Had he been in the frame of mind which the prophet manifested in my text, all these difficulties would have vanished; and he would have engaged in his work as Paul did, who was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision," but "preached at once the faith, which, until that moment, he had labored to destroy."

To anyone, therefore, who desires an answer to the question that has been proposed, I say: *Get your soul filled with love to Christ; and that will answer ten thousand difficulties, and constrain you to engage in anything whereby the kingdom of the Redeemer may be advanced in the world*. You will depend on your Lord and Savior for "grace sufficient for you, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)," and expect that "strength shall be given you according to your day, [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.25)."

As to excuses for withholding or delaying a general surrender of ourselves to God, they are lighter than vanity itself! Do not think that they can stand one moment, when you come before God. *To serve God instantly, and with our whole hearts, is the duty of every Christian*; and therefore, to the proposal which God at this moment makes by my voice, let every individual among you reply, "Here I am. Send me!"

***~~#868~~***

***~~GOD THE ONLY PROPER OBJECT OF FEAR~~***

***~~[Isaiah 8:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.12-14)~~***

"Say you not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear you their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord Almighty himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary." KJV

"Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary!" NIV

True religion, under any circumstances, is of incalculable advantage; but its benefits are most seen and felt when we come into trials of a complicated and overwhelming nature. Such were the troubles of the Jewish nation at the time referred to in my text. The Syrians had entered into a league with the ten tribes of Israel to dethrone Ahaz, King of Judah, and to establish a king of their own appointment upon his throne; and the prospect of this event spread such dismay among the Jewish people, that they were "all moved by it as trees of the forest before the wind, [Isaiah 7:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.1-2); [Isaiah 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.6)." But the prophet was sent to show them where their strength lay, and to assure them, that, if they would but trust in God, they had nothing to fear, since Omnipotence itself would interpose for their deliverance. In the message which the prophet was instructed to deliver to them, we see:

***~~I. A word of reproof.~~***

To the people of that day a reproof was most justly due.

They all were alarmed at the confederacy that had been formed; and each, by expressing his own fears, helped to spread a panic through the land. But the prophet was ordered to disapprove this, both by precept and example, not by any means joining in the general cry, or allowing himself to participate in the people's fears.

Somewhat of a similar consternation prevailed occasionally among the Apostolic Churches; on which account Peter, plainly referring to the very words of my text, bade the Christians of his day not to be troubled about the threats of their adversaries, but to follow the advice here given, [1 Peter 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.14-15).

And are there not many among ourselves who give way to needless fears, on account of the number and inveteracy of their enemies? "We wrestle, not with flesh and blood only, but with all the principalities and powers of Hell;" and at times our hands are ready to hang down, and our hearts to faint in utter despondency.

It was thus with *David* when he said, "I shall one day perish by the hands of Saul."

And more especially was it thus with *Asaph*, when he questioned with himself, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more? [Psalm 77:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-9)."

In fact, by the recital of our own doubts and fears, we often contribute to create the same painful feelings in others, and to diffuse among our brethren apprehensions which ought rather to be disapproved and withstood. We know what discouragement the spies occasioned through the whole camp of Israel by their representations of the promised land, and of the difficulties which must be overcome, before it would be possessed, [Numbers 13:28-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 13.28-33); [Numbers 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 14.1). We know also the commendations given to *Caleb*and to *Joshua*for their manly opposition to such degrading fears [Numbers 32:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 32.10-12).

This shows us of what spirit we should be, whatever confederacies may be formed against us, or whatever difficulties we may have to encounter; we should dismiss all fear from our own hearts, and strengthen to the uttermost, the hands of our timid and desponding brethren.

To his reproof the prophet adds,

***~~II. A word of counsel.~~***

Surely it befit the Jews, whose whole history was one continued record of miraculous interpositions, to "encourage themselves in the Lord their God," and to expect at his hands all needful support. But more particularly were they taught in this place to look unto their Messiah, whose coming had just been predicted in express connection with these very events, [Isaiah 7:7-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.7-14). That he is the person here designated by "the Lord Almighty himself," is evident; because, while he is spoken of as "a Sanctuary" to some, it is declared that he shall be "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to others. Compare verse 14, with [Romans 9:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.33).

Now, says the *prophet*, "Sanctify him in your hearts, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." And precisely the same advice does the Apostle *Peter*give to timid and desponding Christians in his day, "Do not be afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, [1 Peter 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.14-15)."

To "sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts," is, to regard him as possessing all power in Heaven and in earth, and us exercising it for his people's good. This is the true antidote to all distressing fears, from whatever quarter they may arise. For, supposing a confederacy of all the men on earth and all the devils in Hell, what device can prevail against infinite wisdom, or what efforts against Almighty power? If "the Lord's eye is over us for good," it matters not what eye is upon us for evil. "No weapon formed against us can prosper," when both the smith who formed it, and the man who holds it, were created by him and are under his control, [Isaiah 54:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.15-17).

Protected by this Savior, we can have no cause for fear. Our minds may be:  
peaceful in the midst of the most troublous scenes, [Psalm 46:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.1-3);  
confident, though threatened by the most inveterate foes, [Psalm 27:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.3-5);  
and assured, though in circumstances, in which no power less than that which is infinite could uphold us! [Romans 8:35-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.35-39).

This then is the counsel which I would give to every drooping and desponding soul, "Fear none except the Lord Almighty himself." You can never fear Him too much, "Let him therefore be your fear and your dread." But, having him for your Protector, you need fear none else; for "if He is for you, then who can be against you?"

Hear then as from God himself,

***~~III. A word of encouragement.~~***

To his people of old this adorable Savior was "a Sanctuary;" and such he will be to us. You remember that when the Man-slayer had once got within the city of refuge, he was safe; the pursuer of blood could not touch him. So, when once you "have fled to Christ for refuge," you are out of the reach of every enemy! "Your life is hidden with Christ in God;" nor can all the powers of darkness ever destroy it.

It is not by *power*only that you are protected, but by *love*, and *truth*, and faithfulness. The Lord Jesus Christ has pledged his Word, that none shall ever pluck you out of his hands! [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29)." Yes, and Jehovah has "confirmed his Word with an oath, on purpose that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, you may have the stronger consolation, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18)."

What then have you to do but to repose your confidence in him, assured, that "Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle of his Word shall fail!"

Know then for your comfort, that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; and that if you run to, and take refuge in it, you are safe, [Proverbs 18:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 18.10)," safe from every enemy that would assault you; safe in time, and safe in eternity!

***~~And now I appeal to you whether the true believer is not the happiest person upon earth?~~***

I grant, he may be an object of the most inveterate hostility both to men and devils. But he has "horses of fire and chariots of fire all around him, [2 Kings 6:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 6.14-17);" yes, "the Lord Jehovah is himself a wall of fire round about him, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5)," for his protection. Compare the state of Ahaz and all his people at this time, with that of those who believed the prophet's word. Who were the happier, those who feared the confederacy, or those who feared the Lord? See also the state of Hezekiah's mind at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, "The virgin, the daughter of Israel, has laughed you to scorn! [Isaiah 37:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.22)." "The Lord will put a hook in your nose, and a bridle in your jaws, and turn you back by the way by which you came! [Isaiah 37:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.29)."

This is the effect of a realizing sense of God's providence. *The man who fears the Lord has nothing else to fear*; and the man who "sanctifies the Lord," may be assured, that under all circumstances God will preserve him even as the apple of his eye.

But take eternity into the account, and how happy is the believer then! *O what a sanctuary is the Lord to him from the terrors of a guilty conscience, and from the fears of God's wrath!*The believer, and he alone, understands the true import of these words, "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me, because he trusts in me, [Isaiah 26:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.3)." Yes, even at the day of judgment may the believer stand before the Lord with great boldness, [1 John 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.21); [1 John 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.17), while the unbelieving world are "crying to the rocks and to the hills to fall upon them, and to hide them from his wrath!" Make then the Lord Jesus your sanctuary here, and he will be your portion for evermore!

***~~#869~~***

***~~BELIEVERS ARE FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.18)~~***

"Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord Almighty who dwells in Mount Zion."

From the time of Cain and Abel to the present moment, there have existed upon earth two classes of men, essentially distinct from each other, and indeed opposed to each other, even as light and darkness; the one of these consists of men "born after the flesh only; the other, of people born after the Spirit also." Unhappily, it is to the former of these classes that the great majority of mankind have at all times belonged; the latter class has been composed of only a small remnant, who, on that account, have been, to all the rest of the world, objects of reproach and contempt! The Prophet Isaiah complains of this, in his day; and from his complaint I shall take occasion,

**I. To confirm his statement.**

***~~There is, in the special case before us, a reference probably to the prophet's own family at that time.~~***

The prophet had two sons; to whom, by God's special direction, he gave very peculiar names. The name of one was "Shear-jashub, [Isaiah 7:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.3);" the name of the other was "Maher-shalalhash-baz, [Isaiah 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.3)." These names were given for the purpose of declaring to that people, God's intentions respecting them; and the children were therefore both signs of what God had purposed respecting the land, and pledges that he would carry that purpose into effect. *The ungodly people of that day, not believing the purposes of God, turned both the prophet and his children into objects of contempt and ridicule*. And this seems to be the literal import of our text.

But the prophet had some followers also, who, having been converted by his ministry, were regarded by him as "his children". These also, as being witnesses for God against their ungodly neighbors, were, together with the prophet, regarded as objects of popular reproach.

These, too, were honored by the Lord as his peculiar friends and favorites; or, rather, as his own children, to whom he stood in the relation of a Father.

In this respect *the prophet was a type of the Messiah*; who, being the spiritual Parent of these people, acknowledged them as members of his mystical body; yes, as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, [Hebrews 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.13) with [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30)."

Now this rendered them still more liable to the ungodly world; who always hate the saints, in proportion as they bear the divine image, and appear to be objects of God's peculiar love, [John 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.19). And this I conceive to be the precise import of the prophet's words. *He has, in the first place, an obscure reference to his own sons; but he more especially alludes to his pious followers, whom, through the instrumentality of his Word, the Lord himself had brought into the nearest possible union with himself.*Of these he says, that they were "for signs and for wonders in Israel."

***~~In the same light have the saints in all ages been regarded.~~***

In the days of the Apostles, the people of God were looked upon "as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, [1 Corinthians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.13);" and to this very hour are they, as the prophet Zechariah expresses it, "men wondered at! [Zechariah 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.8)." *There is no one thing which will render people more universally despised, than a profession of vital godliness*. Every description of men, the moral and the immoral, the proud Pharisee and the scoffing Infidel, are alike hostile to the true Christian. The whole world will hate a follower of Christ. To the whole world, he himself was a butt of contradiction, [Luke 2:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.34), and all who designated him Beelzebub, will be sure to find some name sufficiently opprobrious, for the purpose of characterizing his faithful disciples.

This statement being still as true as in the prophet's days, I will proceed,

***~~II. To point out its aspect on the parties concerned.~~***

Truly its aspect is very different,

***~~1. On those who account the saints to be "for signs and for wonders".~~***

They, alas! only betray their own ignorance. Methinks, if they exercised any sound judgment, they would rather account themselves "signs and wonders;" and stand amazed that ever they should have been capable of acting so irrational a part as they have, throughout their whole lives. What! "gaze strangely at people, and speak evil of them, merely because they will not run to the same excess of riot" as the ungodly world are pursuing! [1 Peter 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.4). Is this consistent, I will not say, with piety, but with common sense?

But, in fact, these very people, in the midst of all their profane jests or acrimonious proceedings, cannot help venerating, in their hearts, the servants of Christ, and wishing at least to "die their death," even though they will not endeavor to live their life. And assuredly the time is coming, when they will condemn their present conduct as bitterly as now they inveigh against the conduct of the Lord's people. Now they call the saints "the troublers of Israel;" and complain of them, as wishing "to turn the world upside down;" but in a little time their voice will be changed; and they will bemoan themselves, saying, "We fools accounted their life madness, and their end to be without honor; but now, how are they numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth .…but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it."

***~~2. On those who are so accounted.~~***

Be it so, that you are and must be, despised and "hated by all men for Christ's sake." But shall I *condole*with you on this account? No! I will rather *commend*you; for the whole tenor of Scripture pronounces this to be a ground of joy! [Matthew 5:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.10-12). Is it a ground of joy, that "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you? and that you are conformed to your Savior's image? and that he is glorified in you? 1 Peter 4:12-14. Then I bid you rejoice.

Again, Is it aground of joy that the work of God's grace is advanced in you, [1 Peter 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.7), and an accumulated weight of glory is preparing for you, [2 Corinthians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17). Then, again I say, Rejoice!

But particularly bear in mind what was before spoken respecting our blessed Savior's acknowledgment of those who thus serve him with fidelity; even in the presence of his Father he will confess them, as partakers of his nature, and as heirs of his glory! [Hebrews 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.13). I say, then, be content to be signs and wonders for a little season; that you may answer the designs of God respecting you in this world, and be partakers of his glory forever in the world to come!

***~~#870~~***

***~~SEEKING AFTER GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 8:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.19)~~***

"Should not a people seek unto their God?"

The extreme simplicity of this subject renders any further elucidation of it superfluous. The appeals which God makes to men in the inspired volume are exceeding forcible; they make men judges in their own cause; and cannot fail to carry conviction to every mind. Who could resist the appeal of Nehemiah to the usurious and oppressive Israelites, "Ought you not to walk in the fear of God? [Nehemiah 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 5.9)." So I doubt not but that all of you will readily acknowledge the obligation which lies upon you, while I,

**I. Make the appeal to you.**

Nothing can be conceived more just or simple than the question here proposed for your consideration. For,

***~~1. Who among us does not stand in need of help?~~***

Who has not many sins to be forgiven—and many wants, temporal as well as spiritual, to be supplied?

***~~2. Who but God can supply our needs?~~***

We have "not in ourselves a sufficiency even for a good thought, [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5)." Nor is there a creature in the universe able to render us any effectual assistance, [Psalm 49:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 49.7).

***~~3. Is not God both able and willing to do for you all that you can possibly desire?~~***

Suppose your *sins*to be as great as those of Manasseh—can he not pardon them [2 Chronicles 33:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 33.12-13). Or suppose your *necessities*to be as great as those of Israel in the wilderness—can he not supply them? [Psalm 78:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.12-16). [Ephesians 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.20). Search the annals of the world, and find one, if you can, "who ever sought his face in vain! [Isaiah 45:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.19)."

***~~4. Will it not, hereafter, be to you a ground of bitter self-reproach, if you neglect to seek him?~~***

Our Lord will surely say to you at the last day, "How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not! [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.37)." The fault is all your own, "you would not come to me, that you might have life! [John 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.40)." And the conviction of this will be the bitterest ingredient of that cup which shall then be given you to drink to all eternity.

Assured that you cannot but have felt the force of this appeal, I will,

***~~II. Found upon it some suitable advice.~~***

What shall I say?

***~~1. Seek the Lord with understanding.~~***

You must seek God as reconciled to you in Christ Jesus, [2 Corinthians 5:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.19-21). In himself God is "a consuming fire! [Hebrews 12:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.29)." It is in Christ alone that any sinner in the universe can gain access to him, [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6). [Hebrews 10:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.19-22).

***~~2. Seek the Lord with earnestness.~~***

It is not by any formal services that you can hope to succeed. You must "not only seek, but strive, [Luke 13:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.24)." "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence; and the violent must take it by force! [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12)."

***~~3. Seek the Lord with speed.~~***

There may come a time, even in this life, when God may give you over to a reprobate mind, and Heaven may be shut against you forever! [Psalm 81:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.10-12). [Romans 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.28). [Isaiah 55:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.6). At all events, death may quickly terminate all your hopes. In the eternal world, however loudly you may cry, you will "not be able to obtain one drop of water to cool your tongue!"

***~~4. Seek the Lord with constancy.~~***

To the last hour of your life must you continue to seek help from God, as much as at the present moment. If at any period you draw back from him, you will "draw back unto perdition! [Hebrews 10:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.38-39)." You must not "be weary in well-doing;" for "he alone who endures to the end shall be saved! [Matthew 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.22)."

***~~#871~~***

***~~BLESSINGS IMPARTED BY THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 9:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.2-4)~~***

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined. You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy; they joy before you according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian." KJV

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor." NIV

The dispensations of God in this world are never so afflictive, but there are some alleviating and consolatory circumstances to cheer us under them. The judgments with which he threatened to punish his apostate people were very tremendous, [Isaiah 8:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.19-22); yet he comforted them in the mean time with prospects of the Messiah's coming. Whatever reference the words of my text may have to the deliverance of the Jews from Sennacherib's army, *we are sure that they refer to Christ, and to the blessings that should issue from the ministration of his Gospel*. Matthew quotes them in this view, [Matthew 4:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.12-16); and the very words themselves are far more suited to a spiritual subject than to any temporal occurrence.

The first verse of the chapter is inexplicable, according to our version. Bishop Lowth translates it differently, and thereby makes the sense of the whole passage clear. "There shall not hereafter be darkness in the land which was distressed. He formerly debased the land of Zebulon and Napthali, but in the latter time he has made it glorious, even the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. For the people, etc," The meaning is, that as the northern part of Galilee had been particularly afflicted by the incursions of the Assyrians, so it should be particularly honored by the ministry of Christ.

We notice then in the text three rich blessings resulting from the ministry of Christ, and of his servants in all ages; namely, light, joy, and victory. The first which the Christian receives, is,

***~~I. Light.~~***

***~~Men are everywhere "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death".~~***

This was the case with the Jews, notwithstanding they were God's professing people, and had continual access to the Word and ordinances of God. And it is the case with us, notwithstanding we are *called*Christians, and have the Word and sacraments administered among us. We are like people immured in a dungeon, or bereft of sight; light is shining all around us, but we see it not; we are as much in darkness as if there were no light at all! The Scriptures uniformly represent us thus; and experience abundantly confirms their testimony. How ignorant are men:  
of their own hearts;  
of God;  
of the way of salvation; and  
indeed of the whole circle of divine truth!

Nor is this ignorance confined to the illiterate; it prevails as much among the great and learned, as among the poorest and lowest of mankind.

***~~But by the Gospel the eyes of their understanding are opened.~~***

All were not enlightened by the preaching of Christ and his apostles; nor are all instructed now by the Word they hear. But those whose eyes are opened, do attain by the Gospel a wonderful insight into "the truth as it is in Jesus," and a thousand other things, "which the natural man cannot receive," are open to their view!

They discover the depth of their own depravity;  
they behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;"  
"they are brought out of darkness into marvelous light, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9);"  
"neither do they from thenceforth walk any more in darkness, because they have the light of life! [John 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.12)."

Together with light, the Christian is filled with,

**II. Joy.**

That which in the text we read, "You have *not*increased the joy," is in the margin translated, "You *have*increased to it the joy," namely, to the nation of saints that are multiplied. This seems to be the more proper rendering of the words, and to agree best with the context.

***~~1. All who are illuminated with divine truth, have a sacred joy.~~***

Whatever joy a carnal man partakes of, let him only be brought into the divine presence, and it vanishes at once. To speak to him of God and Heaven and Hell, is to make him melancholy. But the Christian's joy is a holy sacred joy, "he rejoices before God." It was appointed under the Law that the people at the beginning and end of harvest should bring their first-fruits and their tithes to the temple, and, feasting upon them with their friends, rejoice before God, [Deuteronomy 16:9-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 16.9-15).

Thus the Christian brings his temporal comforts into the divine presence, that he may enjoy God both in and with them. By piety, all his joys are greatly enhanced; nor does he ever enjoy his food or his friends or any blessing in life so much, as when he is led to God by them, and glorifies his God in them. But the most delightful seasons are those wherein he can go to his God in secret, and pour out his soul before him. One hour spent in communion with his Lord is more to him than a whole life of carnal joy; it is a feast of fat things, an foretaste of Heaven.

***~~2. All who are illuminated with divine truth, have an exalted joy.~~***

The Christian's joy is compared to that of a successful gardener, and a victorious warrior. In every age, the in-gathering of the harvest has been an occasion of joy, [Isaiah 16:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 16.9-10); the seizing also of the spoil from a vanquished enemy has ever been considered as a ground of triumph. There is indeed on both of these occasions too much of what is merely carnal; still however the spirits of the people are raised far beyond their usual pitch.

In this respect the Christian's joy resembles theirs. When he begins to see the fruit of his painful labors and his dubious conflicts, he cannot but rejoice that he has not labored in vain, or fought in vain. Yes, his soul is joyful in his God, and "he rejoices with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

To this the Gospel contributes, by crowning its converts with,

***~~III. Victory.~~***

***~~As natural men are blind, so are they also under sore bondage.~~***

The Egyptian or Babylonian yoke was light in comparison with that which Satan has imposed on all the human race. He holds them fast in his chains, and "leads them captive at his will".

***~~But through the Gospel they are effectually delivered from it.~~***

When the Jewish nation was oppressed by the Midianites, God raised up Gideon to effect its deliverance. But how was the deliverance wrought? by arms? No! God would not allow him to employ the army he had raised, but first released all of them except ten thousand, and then dismissed all of those except three hundred. And how were those three hundred armed? with sword and spear? No! but with earthen pitchers, and lamps, and trumpets; and with this little army so accoutred, he put to flight the whole host of Midian; they broke their pitchers, held forth their lamps, and blew their trumpets; and the enemies were put to flight! [Judges 7:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 7.19-21).

Thus, precisely thus, does the Christian triumph over his enemies; unable to accomplish anything by his own arm—he, by the mere light and sound of the Gospel, vanquishes his foes. When indeed the rout commences, he summons all his powers to destroy them; nor ceases from the pursuit, until he has effectually subdued them all.

Behold a man who was recently enslaved by the world, the flesh, and the devil; see him at once throw off the yoke, behold him trampling on the world, crucifying the flesh, and bruising Satan under his feet!

Is this a dream? No; it is a reality, that may be seen now as much as it was on the day of Pentecost, or on the day that the blood-thirsty Saul became a preacher of the faith he had once destroyed. "Such is the heritage of the servants of the Lord;" they all are conquerors, and "more than conquerors, through Him who loved them!"

***~~Inferences:~~***

***~~1. How strangely do men misconceive of the nature and operation of the Gospel!~~***

That which Christ and his apostles preached, is deemed *fanaticism*, and is supposed to lead to *melancholy*and *licentiousness*. But how opposite is this sentiment to that which is contained in the text! Only let the Gospel be searched into with candor and diligence, and we will venture to affirm that it shall approve itself as light, and become a source of joy, and lead to certain victory. Whatever remains of darkness, grief, or bondage—shall be gradually banished, and the felicity of Heaven be enjoyed, in proportion as the soul is subjected to the dominion of Christ.

***~~2. How much do the saints of God live below their privileges!~~***

If we look at the first converts, we shall be ready to think that they were of a different species from us—so far are we below them in spiritual attainments! But is not the Gospel the same as it was in their day? Does it not require as much of us as it did of them? And will it not operate as powerfully on our hearts as it did on theirs?

O let us not be satisfied with indistinct views of the gospel of grace.

Let us not be contented with such scanty measures of joy and triumph.

Let us not think it enough to gain some small advantages over our spiritual enemies.

Let us look for greater things, and expect more signal displays of the Divine power and goodness!

We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves; let us only be strong in faith; and "according to our faith it shall be unto us."

***~~#872~~***

***~~CHRIST'S INCARNATION AND CHARACTER~~***

***~~[Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6)~~***

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called:  
 Wonderful,  
 Counselor,  
 the mighty God,  
 the everlasting Father,  
 the Prince of Peace!"

There is no true peace or happiness in the world except that which arises from the Gospel of Christ; for God himself testifies that there is no peace to the wicked. But where the Gospel truly prevails, peace and joy immediately spring up as its proper fruits. Such a change as this the prophet describes in the preceding context; and then, in the words before us, traces it to its real source. From the words themselves we shall be led to consider,

***~~I. The coming of Christ to take the charge of his kingdom.~~***

Though given to us by God, he came in an obscure and humble form.

He was a little "child, born" in as helpless a state as others, and subject to all the sinless infirmities of our nature. He was indeed in a more especial manner the gift of the Father's love [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16); the most invaluable gift that God himself could bestow. He was the Child, and the Son, of whom all the prophets spoke, the offspring of a virgin, "Emmanuel, God with us." But as the end of his coming was to redeem our fallen race, he came in such a way, as was best suited to the accomplishment of his own eternal purpose and grace.

Yet, notwithstanding his mean appearance, he came to assume the government of the redeemed Church.

As the Creator of the universe, he must of necessity have also been the governor of it before his incarnation. But now he came to administer the government as mediator; for all judgment was committed to him, not only as the Son of man, but because he was the Son of man [John 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.27). The redeemed Church, in a more especial manner, is subjected to him in this view; and he is the head of it, as well for the purpose of communicating his influence to the members, as of managing its concerns [Ephesians 1:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.22). And so entirely is everything under his control, that not so much as a hair falls from the head of any of his people without either his express command, or righteous permission. As in the days of his flesh he exercised the most unlimited authority over diseases, devils, and the very elements, so now everything, whether designedly, or against its will, fulfills his unerring counsels.

We shall the less wonder at his elevation to a throne, if we consider,

***~~II. His qualifications for the regal office.~~***

His being called by any name, imports that He really is what he is called. He is therefore,

***~~1. A wonderful Counselor~~***

Those are by many considered as two distinct titles; but, if we unite them, each title will have its proper attribute.

He, in concert with the Father, formed the stupendous plan of man's redemption, a plan in which are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [Colossians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.3). Moreover in executing this plan, he has not only defeated all the plots and devices of Satan, but has invariably overruled them for the accomplishment of his own designs. His people too he endues with "wisdom from above," enabling them to discern things hidden from the carnal eye, and guiding them in the way to Heaven, so that a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8). Who that has known ever so small a part of his ways, must not exclaim with amazement, How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

***~~2. The mighty God.~~***

Angels and magistrates are sometimes called gods in a subordinate sense; but He is "The mighty God," "God with us," even "God over all, blessed forever." The dispensations, both of his providence and grace, manifest him to be a "God, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Indeed, if he were not God, he never could bear upon his shoulder the government of the universe. He must be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, or else he never could hear the supplications, and supply the needs of all his people at the same instant. However strange therefore it may seem, He who was a little child, was at the same time the mighty God; it was "the Lord of glory that was crucified;" it was "God who purchased the redeemed Church with his own blood [1 Corinthians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.8). [Acts 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.28)."

***~~3. The everlasting Father.~~***

This title respects not his relation to God (for with respect to that, he is the Son and not the Father) but rather his relation to his spiritual seed, whom he has begotten by his Word and Spirit. But perhaps the words should rather have been translated, "The Father of the everlasting age." The Jewish dispensation was intended to continue but for a limited time; but the Christian dispensation was never to be succeeded by any other; hence it is called "the last times;" and may be considered as "the everlasting age." Of this Christ is the author; it owes its existence to him as its parent; it is preserved by his guardian care; and the whole family in Heaven and earth who participate its blessings, both bear his image, and inherit his glory.

***~~4. The Prince of Peace.~~***

In all which Christ has done, whether in planning or executing the work of redemption, he has consulted the peace and welfare of his people. It was to purchase their peace that he became incarnate and died upon the cross. It was to bestow on them the blessings of peace, that he assumed the reins of government, and undertook to manage all their concerns. Peace was the legacy which he left to his redeemed Church when he was just departing from the world; and, on his ascension, he poured it down like a river on myriads of his blood-thirsty enemies; yes, at this very hour does he dispense it according to his own sovereign will, and impart it, with royal munificence, to all the subjects of his kingdom.

***~~This subject furnishes us with abundant reason,~~***

***~~1. For admiration.~~***

If all Heaven was filled with wonder at the sight of their incarnate God, and if the "Angels yet desire to look into" that "great mystery of godliness," how marvelous should it appear in our eyes! Let us then adore with reverence what we cannot comprehend; and exclaim with profoundest wonder, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift 2 Corinthians 9:15."

***~~2. For gratitude.~~***

Has the mighty God become a little child for us, and shall we regard his condescension with indifference? Is he governing and overruling everything for our good, and shall we feel no sense of his kindness? Let us rather say, What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he has done unto me?

***~~3. For devotedness to God.~~***

If the government be upon his shoulder, we should show ourselves willing to have it there, and submit ourselves cheerfully to his authority. In vain shall we regard him as the source and foundation of our peace, unless we yield ourselves to him as the governor of our lives.

***~~#873~~***

***~~OUR IMPENITENCE UNDER THE DIVINE CHASTISEMENTS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 9:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.13)~~***

"The people turns not unto him who smites them, neither do they seek the Lord Almighty." KJV

"But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought the LORD Almighty." NIV

*As rich as God is in mercy to repenting sinners—He is full of indignation against the impenitent!*Hence his most gracious invitations and promises are often intermixed with the most awful threatenings [Matthew 11:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.20-21); [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28). He had just before declared his intention of sending the Messiah to his chosen people. He now threatens them with utter excision for their impenitence. Compare verse 6, 7 with verse 11-15. The grounds of his displeasure are no less visible among ourselves than among the Jews. We are at this time suffering under his chastising hand. But few, if any, of us are suitably affected with his judgments.

The solemnity of this day The Fast-day, March 1798, leads us to inquire,

***~~I. What is the end for which God chastises us?~~***

He does not ever afflict his people willingly and without a cause. Sin is the ground of the controversy that he has with us. It is for the removal of this that he sends afflictions,

***~~1. Upon individuals.~~***

His most highly favored people are not exempt from chastisement; while they have any sin unmortified, God will not leave them altogether unpunished [Jeremiah 30:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.11). Even the upright Job had much dross which was to be purged in the furnace of affliction [Job 23:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 23.10). David also found much benefit arising from his trials [Psalm 119:71](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.71); and acknowledged them to have been tokens of God's love and faithfulness [Psalm 119:72](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.72). Under the New Testament dispensation God has had the same end in view; He "delivered the incestuous man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus [1 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.5);" and visited with bodily sickness many of those who had profaned the Lord's supper, in order that they might not perish with the ungodly world [1 Corinthians 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.30); [1 Corinthians 11:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.32). Nor can we doubt but that our troubles are sent for the same benevolent purpose; of whatever kind they be, they are intended to purge away our sin, and bring us nearer unto God [Hebrews 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.10).

***~~2. Upon nations.~~***

When a nation is altogether ripe for ruin, God executes vengeance without any view to their reformation; but until then he will continue to correct them with much patience and forbearance. The ten successive plagues of Egypt were sent to overcome their obstinacy. The Israelites, both in the wilderness and in Canaan, were continually informed of the distinct offences for which their various punishments were inflicted; and even their captivity in Babylon was intended for their good [Jeremiah 24:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 24.5). We cannot precisely say what are the peculiar enormities by which we have provoked the Majesty of Heaven. But it is certain that God is visiting us for sin; the calamities we this day deplore, are tokens of his displeasure [Isaiah 42:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.24-25); nor can we expect a removal of them, until the end, for which they are sent us, is accomplished.

It should be the business of this day to inquire.

***~~II. What effect his chastisements have produced upon us?~~***

The rod, which is now held over us, has a voice, if we have ears to hear it [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9). It calls us to repent of all our evil ways. But what change has hitherto been produced,

***~~1. In the nation?~~***

Every reform is talked of, except a reform of our hearts and lives. What order of men among us has duly improved this awful crisis? Is not dissipation as prevalent among the higher ranks as ever? Is there a reformation begun among those who ought above all to be examples to the flock Those whom God particularly notices in the text, are "the ancient and honorable, and the prophet that teaches lies."? Are the watchmen, whose office it is to warn others, as earnest and faithful as the occasion requires [Ezekiel 33:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.6-8). Are evils of any kind put away from among us? Or is there, even at this hour, any serious appearance of turning unto God? Are not our very fasts a mere formal and hypocritical lip-service? May they not even be numbered among our greatest sins? Alas! what shall the end of these things be? The generality are altogether regardless of God's displeasure; because they do not feel in their own persons the stroke of his rod, they are indifferent about the calamities of others [Isaiah 57:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.10). Many, like Ahaz, have even increased in their iniquities since the commencement of our present troubles [2 Chronicles 28:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 28.22). They have hardened their hearts and refused to receive correction; nor will they cry when God binds them [Job 36:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 36.13). Nor is this peculiar to anyone order of people more than another [Jeremiah 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.1); [Jeremiah 5:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.4-5); some are presumptuously boasting of our power to withstand the arm of God verse 10; others, of whom better things might have been hoped, refuse to unite even in the outward services of this day. (Have these men never done anything to increase our national guilt, that they refuse to deprecate our national judgments? Or have they no occasion to implore mercy for themselves?) To none was the prophet's complaint ever more applicable than to ourselves at this juncture [Isaiah 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.4-6).

***~~2. In individuals?~~***

Some there are, we trust, who "weep between the porch and the altar." Some are "grieved for the affliction of Joseph [Amos 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 6.6), but these are few in number; nor are they by any means so deeply affected as they ought to be. But where shall we find any that have been humbled under the divine chastisements? Who among us is truly "turning unto him who smites us?" Who is "seeking the Lord Almighty?" Who have been mourning over their sins this day in secret? Who have put from them their idols and their abominations [Ezekiel 20:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.7). Who have cried for mercy as perishing sinners? Or stood in the gap to intercede for their distressed country? Happy they whose personal troubles have wrought this blessed change! But we fear that few, if any, have so laid to heart the public calamities, as to have experienced from them such a beneficial effect.

***~~We shall conclude our inquiries with some suitable and important observations.~~***

***~~1. God will surely overcome at last.~~***

He is now maintaining a controversy with us. Nor can we expect that he should lay aside his rod until it has accomplished his will. If we continue to walk contrary to him, no doubt he will continue to walk contrary to us. If the scourging us with rods will not suffice, he will scourge us with scorpions [1 Kings 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 12.11). He will repay us seven-fold more for our sins [Leviticus 26:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.21); [Leviticus 26:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.27-28). Four times are we warned that his hand is stretched out still [Isaiah 9:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.12); [Isaiah 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.17); [Isaiah 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.21); [Isaiah 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.4). Let us then cease from the unequal combat [Ezekiel 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 22.14). [Isaiah 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.3), and turn to him, before the measure of our iniquities be completely filled.

***~~2. If we turn to God with our whole hearts, he will cease from his anger.~~***

We have most abundant evidence of this delightful truth. The repentance of Nineveh is a standing encouragement for all nations. [Jonah 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jonah 3.10). Even the temporary humiliation of Ahab prevailed to defer the impending judgments [1 Kings 21:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 21.29). What then should not be effected if this whole nation turned to God in sincerity? God would sooner send an angel to deliver us, or open a passage for us through the sea, than suffer our enemies to prevail against us [Exodus 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.22) with [Isaiah 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.10) and [2 Kings 19:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 19.35) with [Psalm 34:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 34.7). His promise to this effect is absolute [Jeremiah 18:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 18.8). Let this consideration lead us to repentance; and let the prophet's advice to mourn, and fast, and weep, be followed without delay [Joel 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.12-13).

***~~3. If we return not to God, our present miseries will he only a pledge of far greater miseries in another world.~~***

God punishes men in this world in their national capacity; but in the eternal world every individual shall answer for his own sins. Nor are we left to doubt what will be the doom of the impenitent [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.3). In comparison with that, temporal calamities are of no account. Oh! who can dwell with everlasting burnings [Isaiah 33:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.14). Let me beseech you then by the terrors of the Lord. It would be terrible indeed to fall into the hands of man; but woe be to those who fall into the hands of the living God [Hebrews 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.31). Let the exhortation of Christ then sink deep into your hearts, "Do not fear man, who can only kill the body, but God, who can destroy both body and soul in Hell. I say unto you all, Fear him! [Luke 12:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.5)."

***~~#874~~***

***~~PRIDE AND DOWNFALL OF THE ASSYRIAN MONARCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 10:12-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.12-17)~~***

"It shall come to pass, that, when the Lord has performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks; for he says, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have rubbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man; and my hand has found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathers eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the axe boast itself against him who hews therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him who shakes it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord Almighty, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning, like the turning of a fire; and the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day." KJV

"When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes. For he says: "'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings. As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries; not one flapped a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp.'" Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood! Therefore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors; under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame. The Light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briers!" NIV

*The doctrine of an all-disposing Providence is most consolatory to the mind of man.*If everything were left to chance, or were at the disposal of mortal men, we would have nothing to cheer us in adversity, or to moderate our pride in prosperity. But the thought that all things are directed by an all-wise Being, who "does according to his will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," and "whose counsel," whatever the designs of men may be, "shall surely stand," preserves our minds composed and equable in every situation, and in every condition.

The situation of Jerusalem at the time when the prophet wrote this was very afflictive; but by God's command he addressed them thus, in a few verses following our text, "O my people that dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite you with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against you, after the manner of Egypt (at the Red Sea); for yet a very little while, and (as in the case of Pharaoh and his host) the indignation shall cease, and my anger in their destruction, verse 24, 25." To the same effect does he speak also in the text itself; which we shall consider,

***~~I. As fulfilled in Sennacherib.~~***

***~~Sennacherib was a proud and haughty monarch.~~***

The Assyrian empire was the most powerful at that time existing in the world; and Sennacherib was dignified with the title of, the Great King! [2 Kings 18:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.19); [2 Kings 18:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.28). He himself too conceived that he was omnipotent, a rival of Jehovah, or rather, his superior! 2 Kings 18:33-35 with [Isaiah 14:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.13-14).

Strange it is that mortal man should entertain such wild conceits; but such is frequently the effect of power; it altogether intoxicates us worms of the earth, and makes us forget that we are men, [Ezekiel 28:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 28.2) and [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.3-4).

***~~But God brought him down in a most awful manner.~~***

In one single night his power was broken by the sword of a destroying angel, who slew 185,000 of his troops; and, not very long after, was he himself assassinated by two of his sons, while worshiping in the house of Nisroch his God, [2 Kings 19:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 19.35-37). And thus it is that God has often humbled his proud blaspheming creatures! [Ezekiel 28:3-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 28.3-10); yes, and more such instances of vengeance yet remain to be accomplished! 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

This subject, so interesting of itself, is yet far more interesting,

**II. As illustrated at this time.**Thanksgiving-day, Jan. 13, 1814.

The resemblance between Sennacherib, and that powerful enemy with whom we have been contending now so many years, is very striking. We will point it out in a few particulars:

***~~1. His unconscious agency.~~***

The great object of Sennacherib's ambition was to subdue as many nations as he could, and bring them under subjection to himself. This was his object in warring against Judah.

But God had another object in view. God raised him up to punish his offending people the Jews, and thereby to bring them to repentance. No such thought as this entered into the mind of Sennacherib. He went on with a view to his own aggrandizement; but God made use of him as "the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation! verse 5-7."

Thus it has been with him who has for so long a period desolated every part of Europe, Napoleon Bonaparte, Jan. 13, 1814. He has been instigated only by his own ambition, and a desire after universal empire; but God has been using him to punish the nations, who, though "naming the name of Christ, had scarcely anything of Christianity except the name!" As God's instrument he has effected a very great change in Europe; he has given a death-blow to Popery, and has liberated the minds of men from those shackles with which they were held in a worse than Egyptian bondage.

He has also, though quite unintentionally on his part, rooted out those principles of infidelity towards God, and of insubordination towards man, which were the means of placing him on his high eminence, and which he himself labored as much as anyone to disseminate.

Nay more, by the very miseries which he has inflicted on the human race, he has occasioned a spirit of humiliation and of piety, which, unless at the Reformation and in the apostolic age, never before prevailed in Europe to the extent it now does. True it is, "he never meant these things, nor did they ever enter into his mind;" but still *he has been an instrument in God's hand of effecting them*.

**2. His great success.**

Nothing could stand before Sennacherib, verse 9-11; and until lately, nothing has been able to withstand this proud oppressor, whom we are comparing with him. Nation after nation has he subjugated; so that what Sennacherib said may be justly said by him also, "Are not my princes altogether kings, verse 8." While he raised his generals to the rank of kings, he made the old established kings his vassals. And truly one part of Sennacherib's commission he executed to perfection; if he had believed himself "charged by God, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread men down like mire in the streets, verse 6," he could not have fulfilled his mission with more fidelity or with less remorse. He truly regarded the wealth of all the countries which he invaded, as "eggs found in a nest;" and he transported to his own capital everything that was valuable, that the seat of his empire might become the center of all that was great and glorious in the world. Yes, not content with acting thus towards the nations that opposed him, he exercised the same rapacity towards neutral and unoffending states; and, while he was "gathering all the earth, there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped, verse 14," or dared even to remonstrate with him, and much less to oppose by force, his tyrannical proceedings.

In a word, he "removed the bounds of nations," apportioning them according to his own pleasure, and "robbed their treasures, verse 13," compelling all of them to augment and support his armies; and, with the exception of our favored land, he exercised in every country a most despotic sway; and, if he could but have placed any bounds to his tyranny, and been content with consolidating instead of extending his dominions, he would have been the uncontrolled governor of Europe at this hour!

***~~3. His atheistic pride.~~***

The Assyrian monarch took to himself all the glory of his conquests, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent, verse 13." And how astonishingly striking is the resemblance between our great enemy and him in this particular! His official reports have been one continued boast from beginning to end. Never once has God been acknowledged by him an the disposer of the different events. We wonder not that a heathen should vaunt himself in this manner; but that a man professing himself a Christian should do it, and that too in the face of the whole Christian world, only shows to what a height his pride and impiety have risen.

Well is the folly, as well as the impiety of such conduct exposed in our text; it is, in fact, "the ax boasting itself against him who hews with it; and the saw magnifying itself against him who shakes it; it is the rod shaking itself against him who lifts it up, and the staff lifting itself up against its, Master verse 15."

Presumptuous man! "Know that the Lord is greater than all gods; and that wherever they deal proudly, he is, and will be, above them! [Exodus 18:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 18.11)."

***~~4. His sudden fall.~~***

In one single night was Sennacherib overthrown. So completely was that prediction verified, "The Light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day!"

And taking the day for a prophetic day, it has been almost as literally accomplished in our great adversary. It was very little more than a year, between the time when he was in the plenitude of his power, and the time when he was reduced to his present state of weakness and degradation. There is a remarkable correspondence too in the very terms in which the destruction of the Assyrian monarch was foretold, and the means by which the destruction of the modern Sennacherib was effected.

"God himself was for a fire and a flame," to burn him out of that city, where he had hoped to rest his army during the winter season. God put it into the heart of the people themselves to reduce their own houses to ashes, rather than to let them prove an asylum to their barbarous invader. This it was that necessitated him to measure back his steps "by the way he had come, [2 Kings 18:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.28); [2 Kings 18:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.33);" and this retreat was attended with the loss of all his army.

Another desperate effort has he made to retrieve his fortunes; but that also was defeated in one single battle; which has left him more naked and destitute than Sennacherib himself; his own more immediate territory, which he had proudly deemed inviolable, being now invaded on every side, and his regal power being probably near the close of its existence. We pretend not ourselves to prophesy; but the time is probably very near at hand, when Ezekiel's description of the character and end of the Tyrian monarch will be accomplished in him in all its parts, "Will he then say before him who slays him, I am God? No! He will be a man, and not God, in the hand of him who slays him! [Ezekiel 28:3-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 28.3-10)."

Our text is yet further worthy of attention,

***~~III. As speaking to men in all ages.~~***

Divested of all those particular circumstances which give it more than ordinary interest at this time, it suggests many lessons of great, and general, and perpetual utility.

***~~1. It teaches us to receive afflictions as from the hand of God.~~***

The Jews probably ascribed their troubles to the insatiable ambition of the Assyrian monarch; as we also have traced ours to the ruler of France. But God has told us, that, in the triumphs of Sennacherib, he himself was "performing a gracious work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem;" and we know that *Nebuchadnezzar also, and Cyrus, in their victories, were nothing more than "God's sword" and "battle-ax*, [Jeremiah 25:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 25.9). [Isaiah 41:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.25); [Isaiah 45:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.1) with [Jeremiah 51:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 51.20)."

In this light then we should view all our public calamities. By whoever they may be occasioned, they come from God himself, and are sent by him for our good. As the Jews were sent by him into captivity in Babylon "for their good, [Jeremiah 24:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 24.5)," so are *our severest losses and defeats intended to humble us, and to bring us to the footstool of our God*.

The same may be said also of our personal afflictions. When the Chaldeans and Sabeans plundered all the property of Job, and the elements conspired to augment and complete his misery, Job saw in every part of his trials the hand of God, "The *Lord*gave, and the *Lord*has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord, [Job 1:13-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 1.13-21)." And afterwards he prayed, "Show me why *you*contended with me [Job 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.2)."

This is precisely what the text teaches us also to do in every affliction. We should receive it as from God; and, having done so, we should "hear the rod, and him who appointed it."

Were we but attentive to God's voice in afflictive dispensations, we should say to the instruments of our trouble, as Joseph did to his brethren, "It was not you who sent me here, but God;" and, instead of quarreling with second causes, we should kiss the hand that smote us, and say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

***~~2. It teaches us to acknowledge God in our successes.~~***

Certainly the interposition of God in the destruction of Sennacherib could admit of no doubt; it was as clear as that of Pharaoh, who was brought into the Red Sea for that very purpose, verse 24 with [Exodus 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.17). And scarcely less visible was his agency in the destruction of our great adversary. God allured him into the heart of the Russian empire, and inclined him to continue there, until his retreat was become impractical; and to a still further infatuation did he give him up; for, instead of retreating with his forces entire to the confines of his own kingdom, where he might, humanly speaking, have defied all the efforts of the allies—he madly retained an untenable position, until he was reduced to the necessity of risking all upon a single battle.

In these errors of his we see him given up to judicial blindness in order to his destruction, precisely as the enemies of Zion were in the days of old, "Many nations," says the prophet Micah, "are gathered against you, that say: Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel; for he shall gather them as sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion! [Micah 4:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 4.11-13)." Indeed, notwithstanding the backwardness of men to "consider the operation of God's hands," there is scarcely a thoughtful person to be found, who does not see it, and acknowledge in the present instance, that he gathered them together in both those places as sheaves into the garner.

But we must not think that God interposes only in great concerns, such as the fate of empires; *he equally interests himself in all the events that are daily and hourly occurring; and from him does our success flow, even in the most trivial matters*.

Have we succeeded in business? It is "he who has given us power to get wealth, [Deuteronomy 8:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 8.17-18)."

Have our agricultural labors been followed with an abundant increase? Not the abundance only, but the skill we exercised, was altogether from "God, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working! [Isaiah 28:23-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.23-29)."

Have we prospered in our spiritual course, and gained the victory over our spiritual adversaries? We must say with Paul, "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5)." "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:57 and [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14)."

*Whatever evil we escape, or whatever good we enjoy, God must be regarded as the true, the only source of all.* "In him are all our fresh springs [Psalm 87:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.7);" and "of him is our fruit found [Hosea 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.8);" and all the glory must be his alone! [Isaiah 45:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.5-7).

***~~3. It teaches us to look to the final outcome of everything.~~***

Who that saw the outcome of Sennacherib's invasion, would not prefer the beneficial trials of Jerusalem before the short-lived triumphs of the proud Assyrian? And who that considers aright, does not now congratulate the yet bleeding countries of Europe, especially those who have derived spiritual benefit from their afflictions, and look with pity on the fallen oppressor, laden as he must be with an intolerable load of conscious guilt, and the curses and execrations of half the human race?

We may have been stumbled for awhile, just as David was, at the sight of *prosperous wickedness*; but, if with him we enter into the sanctuary, and contemplate the end of these men, or if we look at their end as exemplified in our fallen adversary, we shall know how to judge of such mysterious dispensations, [Psalm 73:3-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.3-14); [Psalm 73:16-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.16-20).

***~~In like manner we may learn how to judge of everything, whether prosperous or adverse, in our own affairs. Let us look to the final outcome.~~***

***~~What will prosperity benefit us, if it draws us from God, and leads us, like the rich fool, to fix our happiness on things below?~~***

***~~On the other hand, what reason can we have to complain of afflictions, if they be sanctified to our spiritual and eternal good?~~***

Has the stone reason to complain that it receives many strokes, when it is thereby fitted for a conspicuous place in the Temple of the Lord?

Or the vine, even granting it to be fruitful, that it is "pruned, when it is made thereby to bring forth more fruit?"

Or the vessel, that it is put into the furnace, when it is thereby rendered fit for the Master's use?

Do not then be so much concerned to get rid of present trials, as to have them made subservient to the good of your souls. Only beg of God, that "his whole work may be performed upon you;" and leave the means of accomplishing that work to Him, who orders everything with unerring wisdom and unbounded love. You will then see, before long, that "he has abounded towards you with all wisdom and prudence;" and in all future trials you will say, "Though he slay me—yet will I trust in him."

***~~#875~~***

***~~CHRIST'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIS OFFICE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3)~~***

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." KJV

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him:  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of power,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;  
and He will delight in the fear of the LORD." NIV

The richest promises which God has given to the Church, are generally introduced after some awful threatening denounced against his enemies. The prophet has been predicting the utter ruin of the Assyrians, as of a tree cut down to the very stump. He then contrasts the state of the Church, to which the Messiah should come, springing like a tender shoot from the root of Jesse, after that his family should have been reduced to the lowest state of degradation. He then, in reference perhaps to what he had before spoken respecting "the anointing, [Isaiah 10:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.27)," shows who this anointed person should be, and what was that unction with which he should be consecrated to his office.

*From the words of the text, which beyond all doubt refer to Christ, the Son of David*, we shall be led to consider,

**I. His qualifications for his office.**

The same Spirit that formed Christ's body in the virgin's womb, [Matthew 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.18); [Matthew 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.20), endowed also his soul with all the faculties requisite for the discharge of his high office.

Jesus Christ, as a man, needed to have his mind enlightened, and his heart sanctified, even as other men; nor could he have been qualified for his mediatorial work, if he had not been anointed in a superabundant measure, by the Holy Spirit, [Psalm 45:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.7). God therefore anointed him, [Acts 10:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.38), and caused the Spirit to rest upon him, [John 1:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.32), not merely for a time, and for a limited purpose, as he had done to others, [Numbers 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 11.25-26), but in an immeasurable fullness, [John 3:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.34), and for every end for which he could possibly need it, [Luke 4:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.18-19).

The Spirit came upon him as a "Spirit of wisdom and understanding." Vitringa thinks that the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit are here enumerated. See [Revelation 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.4); [Revelation 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.6). But we rather suppose that each couplet (not each expression) is to be taken separately, as declaring, in a comprehensive manner, the operations of the Holy Spirit." He gave to Jesus a full and comprehensive view of all the mysteries which from eternity had been hidden in the bosom of the Father, [John 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.28); and enabled him also to discern the most secret recesses of men's hearts, [Matthew 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.4); so that nothing, either in Heaven or in earth, was concealed from him, [John 21:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 21.17).

The Spirit, as "a spirit of counsel and might," instructed him how to conduct himself in all those situations of difficulty and danger into which he was continually brought; and endued him with such undaunted courage, unwearied activity, and invincible patience, that through the whole course of his ministry he never yielded to discouragement, or erred by inadvertence, [Isaiah 42:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.2); [Isaiah 42:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.4); [Isaiah 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.6); [Isaiah 50:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.4); [Isaiah 50:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.7).

The Spirit further enriched his soul with "the knowledge and fear of God." Through his incessant operations, he was enabled to maintain a continual sense of the divine presence, [John 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.29), and to act in all things with a view to his Father's glory, [John 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.18); [John 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.30). Under the influence of this divine principle He was carried on in one steady course, like the sun in its orbit, causing its light to shine with unclouded splendor through the whole period of his sojourning on earth, [John 8:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.46); [John 17:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.4).

***~~By these means Jesus attained the most consummate holiness.~~***

The terms whereby the prophet expresses the quickness of Christ's spiritual perceptions, are taken from that power of smelling, which some animals possess, and which admirably represents the exquisite sensibility which our Lord possessed with respect to everything that was right and fitting to be said or done.

His enemies of every description, Herodians, Pharisees, and Sadducees, endeavored to ensnare him. Sometimes they tempted him with questions, which, in whatever way they should be answered, would give them occasion against him; but he invariably replied with such consummate wisdom as defeated their purposes, and filled them with admiration, [Matthew 22:16-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.16-21); [Matthew 22:23-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.23-40). Sometimes they sought opportunity to entrap him by means of his actions; but still he was armored against their malice, and always turned their efforts to their own confusion, [John 8:3-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.3-9). [Luke 6:6-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.6-11). He knew on all occasions how to vary his conduct, so as ultimately to answer best the purposes of his mission. And so precise was his discernment, so unsearchable his skill, that, whether he denounced judgments or proclaimed mercy, whether he maintained silence or "witnessed a good confession," he invariably combined majesty with meekness, and fidelity with love.

Nor (to carry on the metaphor) was he less earnest in following, than he was acute in discerning, the path of duty. If he had spent the night in prayer, he still prosecuted by day his labors of love, until he was exhausted with fatigue, and his friends declared that his zeal transported him beyond the bounds of reason, [Mark 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 3.21); so fully was that prophecy accomplished in him, "The zeal of your house has consumed me! [John 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 2.17)."

Such being his qualifications, let us consider,

***~~II. Our interest in them.~~***

This is by no means a speculative subject, since it serves to show us,

***~~1. Christ's sufficiency for his work of salvation.~~***

The work which Christ had to do for us was exceeding arduous. He was to obey the law without deviating from it in the smallest point, in thought, word, or deed. If therefore he had been turned aside by any obstacle, or had erred through any inadvertence, or fallen short through any weakness, or exceeded through any temptation—then he would have been a violator of the law; and, instead of being a Savior to us, would have needed a Savior for himself. But by these rich endowments which were communicated to him by the Holy Spirit he was enabled to maintain an unspotted purity even to the last; and, having fulfilled the law in its utmost extent, he has "brought in an everlasting righteousness," which "shall be unto all and upon all those who believe."

Besides this, he has a work to do in us. He is exalted to be "head over all things to the church, [Ephesians 1:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.22-23) ," in order that he may instruct his people in divine knowledge, and counsel them in their difficulties, and strengthen them in their trials, and maintain in them a superlative regard for God. And how should he effect all this, if he himself did not possess an inexhaustible treasure, out of which he might impart to every needy suppliant? But we need not fear, since we are assured, that in him all fullness dwells, [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19), and that out of his fullness we may all receive, even grace upon grace, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16). We may therefore safely glory in him as made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and complete redemption! [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30).

***~~2. The blessings we expect at his hands.~~***

That holy oil which was poured upon the head of our great High-priest, was to descend to the skirts of his clothing, and to the very lowest of his members, [Psalm 133:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 133.2). Nor are his people called Christians merely as being followers of him, but also as being partakers of the same divine unction, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27). As soon as he was seated on his throne of glory, he poured out his Spirit upon his waiting disciples for the very ends and purposes for which he himself had received it, [Acts 2:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.33). [Galatians 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.22). Instantly they were filled with a "wisdom and understanding" which exceeded that of the greatest philosophers. They were endued with such "counsel and might," that none could withstand their words, or shake their resolution. And to such a degree were their hearts filled with the "love and fear of God," that *all sublunary things were divested both of charms and terrors, and the service of God became, as it were, the very element in which they breathed*.

Thus may the most ignorant among us have "the eyes of his understanding enlightened" by Jesus; to every one of us will he approve himself a "wonderful counselor, [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6);" he will "strengthen us with might in our inward man;" he will fill us with a most affectionate and reverential regard for God; he will give us both an exquisite discernment of what is right, and a supreme delight in it, [Colossians 1:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.9-11); and, in a word, he will "transform us into his own image in righteousness and true holiness! [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24)."

However different these gifts may appear, and however unequal the capacities of those who are to receive them, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25). [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8), they shall be imparted to all according to their measure of faith, [Ephesians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.7). [Matthew 9:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.29); and the Spirit that Jesus will bestow, shall work them all, and in all, [1 Corinthians 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.4); [1 Corinthians 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.11).

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

It has been seen that Christ "ascended up on high on purpose that he might fill all things, [Ephesians 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.10);" moreover he has assured us that, if we ask for the gift of his Spirit, we shall not ask in vain, [Luke 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.13). Now we cannot but acknowledge that we need the influences of the Holy Spirit in all the preceding particulars. In consequence of our not habitually weighing all existing circumstances with due care and impartiality, we are extremely apt to err, and, by injudicious conduct, to give offence. I wish religious professors to pay particular attention to this hint. But it is both our duty and our privilege to "walk wisely before God in a perfect way."

The Holy Spirit is promised to us for this very end. Let all then direct their eyes unto him. Let the ignorant, the doubting, the weak, and all who desire to have the divine life carried on and perfected in their souls, apply to him. Nor let any rest satisfied with low attainments, since Christ is both able and willing to enlarge our faculties, and to increase our sanctity, and to bring us to the measure of his own perfect stature! [Ephesians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.13).

***~~#876~~***

***~~THE CHANGE TO BE WROUGHT BY THE GOSPEL IN THE LATTER DAY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 11:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.6-9)~~***

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea!"

*The happiness and prosperity of kingdoms depend much on the wisdom and equity of those who govern.* Yet the best of rulers cannot always secure their people either from the turbulence of faction, or from assaults of foreign enemies.

Thus it is with the kingdom of Christ on earth. He, the Lord and Governor of all, is endowed with every qualification for the discharge of his regal office, verse 1-4, and executes that office with consummate equity and wisdom, verse 5; yet, through the infirmities of his subjects, and the malice of his adversaries, his kingdom is far from enjoying the full advantages of his administration. *There will, however, be a time, when his dominion shall be extended over all the earth, and perfect peace shall reign throughout all his empire*.

The prophecy on which this observation is grounded, will naturally lead us to show,

***~~I. The change that shall be wrought on men in the latter day.~~***

***~~Men in their interactions with each other too much resemble the brute creation.~~***

It is indeed humiliating to compare men with venomous and ferocious beasts; but there is scarcely any beast, however savage, to which God himself has not compared us. He likens us to:  
foxes, [Song of Songs 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 2.15);  
serpents and vipers, [Matthew 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.7); [Matthew 23:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.33);  
wolves, [Matthew 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.16);  
wild donkeys, [Jeremiah 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.24);  
wild boars, [Psalm 80:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 80.13);  
wild bulls, [Isaiah 51:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.20), etc.

Nor is it by figurative representation only, but by plain and express declarations, that God has marked the evil dispositions of our fallen nature, [Romans 1:29-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.29-31). [2 Timothy 3:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.2-4). And if we either look around us, or within us, we shall see that his descriptions are by no means exaggerated. Let anyone observe:  
the proud and envious,  
the wrathful and malicious,  
the selfish and covetous workings of the heart,  
and he shall soon perceive that, *if man were unrestrained by human laws, he would prey upon his fellow-man with as much ferocity as the beasts themselves!*

***~~But in the latter day universal harmony shall prevail.~~***

Then this beautiful description shall be fully realized. Men shall dwell together as the beasts in the ark, none attempting to hurt or destroy another; or rather, they shall dwell together as the beasts in Paradise; none having so much as a disposition to hurt; but all filled with gentleness and love.

This event is foretold in other passages of Holy Writ, [Isaiah 65:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.25); and it shall surely be accomplished at the appointed season, "The zeal of the Lord Almighty will do this."

To confirm our expectation of this universal change, let us consider,

***~~II. The means by which it shall be effected.~~***

***~~It is beyond the power of any human efforts to accomplish this universal harmony.~~***

*However civilization may have changed the external manners of men, it is but too evident that their hearts are the same as ever!* In proof of this we need only appeal:  
to the bloody wars which nations wage with each other;  
to the duels which are fought on account of the most trifling injuries or insults;  
and to the execrable traffic in slaves, which, to the disgrace of the Christian name, yes, to the disgrace of humanity itself, is justified and carried on among us—in spite of all the efforts that have been made for its abolition.

If further proof were necessary, we may all find it very abundantly in the various circles in which we move; for there is scarcely a society, or even a single family, in which feuds, dissensions, quarrels, do not frequently arise; yes, the very relatives most interested in cultivating love and harmony, are often most at variance. Does not this show how beastly we are, notwithstanding the restraints of wholesome laws, and the instructions given us in the Word of God?

***~~But the Gospel of Christ, when universally received, shall soon effect this universal harmony.~~***

Men continue like wild beasts, because "they know not the Lord, [1 Samuel 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.12)." The knowledge of Christ, and of his salvation, would produce a wonderful change on their spirit and conduct. Behold, what it wrought as soon as ever the Gospel was preached! Thousands of blood-thirsty murderers were transformed into the most lovely and loving of the human race, [Acts 4:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.32). And, wherever it is received, its tendency is the same. It is the rod of God's strength, which brings down every adverse power, and accomplishes for man the salvation of his soul! [Psalm 110:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.2). [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.4-5). [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16). When the gospel is truly received, it:  
renews all after the same image, [Colossians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.10);  
brings all into the same family, [Ephesians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.19). [2 Corinthians 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.18);  
unites all in the same interests, [Ephesians 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.4-5);  
and forms all into one mystical body, [1 Corinthians 12:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.20-21); [1 Corinthians 12:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.25); [1 Corinthians 12:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.27).

How then can it fail of producing harmony and love?

This knowledge shall at a future period be universally diffused, [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14); and these effects shall as universally result from it, [Isaiah 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.4) and [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12).

***~~Let us learn from this subject,~~***

***~~1. The nature of true conversion.~~***

Conversion does not consist in embracing any tenets, however scriptural, or important. The knowledge of Christ is indeed, as has been before observed, the means of converting us; but *conversion itself consists in a radical change in all our tempers, dispositions, and conduct, and in a renewal of our souls after the divine image!*2 Corinthians 5:17. [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24). The lion must become a lamb; we must "become as little children, if ever we would enter into the kingdom of Heaven, [Matthew 18:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.3)."

**2. The excellency of the Gospel.**

In vain is the moral fitness of things insisted on; yes, in vain are the demands of the law and the terrors of Hell displayed, for the conversion of men. Nothing but the knowledge of Christ crucified can ever operate on the soul of man, so as to produce in it a radical and universal change! [Romans 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.3). But where Christ is known aright, there the whole man will assume a new character; and in proportion as his glory is seen by us, we shall be assimilated to his image, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18). Do not let the Gospel then be despised as fanatical, or be defamed as licentious; but let it be revered and embraced with our whole hearts.

***~~3. The blessedness of those who know the Lord.~~***

It is to be lamented that the knowledge of Christ does not produce in these days the full effects that were visible in the Apostles. But *the fault is in us, and not in the Gospel*. Nevertheless there are many, who, even in this age of vice and infidelity, are *monuments of the power and grace of Christ*; and who, from having been as despiteful towards each other as Jews and Gentiles, are living in the sweetest communion with each other, and with their God. Happy are those:  
whose *views*are thus rectified,  
whose *passions*are thus subdued,  
and whose *lives*are thus regulated by the Gospel of Christ! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29).

They have indeed a paradise below; and shall soon enjoy uninterrupted harmony in Heaven! [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3); [1 John 4:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.16-17).

***~~#877~~***

***~~THE MILLENNIUM~~***

***~~[Isaiah 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.9)~~***

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!"

The generality of mankind ascribe a far greater degree of moral influence to civilization, than the state of the heathen world in its most refined ages will justify. We are willing however to admit, that some good effects are to be traced to this cause. But to renew and sanctify the heart is far beyond its power; this is the province of religion, even of that religion which is revealed to us in the Gospel.

The prophet has been describing in most beautiful language the change that shall one day be wrought on the face of the earth; and he traces it to the propagation of the Gospel, and the extension of divine knowledge, as its true and only source, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb," etc. for "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."

In these words he shows us,

**I. Wherein true religion consists.**

It cannot be more justly or comprehensively described than in these words, "the knowledge of the Lord".

Many indeed, even of those who call themselves Christians, suppose that religion is altogether comprehended in doing unto others as we would like them to do unto us. But, though it must be acknowledged that this is an important branch—yet it is far from being the whole, since it relates only to the duties of the second table, and leaves out all the duties which we owe to God. We must rather say, that *the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus is the sum and substance of religion*; because in this is contained that vital energy which puts forth itself in all the fruits of righteousness. It is in this light that the Scriptures continually represent it. The Prophet Isaiah says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many! [Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11)." Jeremiah cautions us against "glorying in anything, but in the understanding and knowing of God" as displaying justice and mercy in the person of Christ, [Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.23-24). Our Lord himself affirms that, "to know God, and Jesus Christ as sent by him, is life eternal! [John 17:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.1)." And Paul "counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord! [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8)."

***~~But by "the knowledge of the Lord" we must of necessity understand a practical and experimental knowledge of him.~~***

Were a speculative knowledge sufficient, Balaam, and even the devils themselves, might vindicate their claim to religion; since he could boast, that he "knew the knowledge of the Almighty," and indeed prophesied of Christ in very exalted terms, [Numbers 24:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 24.16-17); and they could say to Christ, "We know who you are, the Holy One of God [Luke 4:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.34)."

But the only knowledge that can be considered as constituting saving religion, is that which the apostle so emphatically described and so earnestly desired, "I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, and know him in the power of his resurrection, in the fellowship of his sufferings, and in a conformity to his death! [Philippians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.10)."

John, with a simplicity peculiar to himself, confirms this truth, saying, "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [1 John 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.3-4)."

As painful as the general lack of this practical and experimental religion is at present, we shall be comforted in considering,

***~~II. In what manner it shall hereafter prevail.~~***

The comparison, which the prophet makes between the diffusion of true religion and the waters of the unfathomable and boundless ocean, leads us naturally to observe:

***~~1. The knowledge of the Lord in that day will be universal in its extent.~~***

Improbable as this event may appear, there is scarcely any other so frequently and so plainly foretold in the prophetic writings as this. David, in a Psalm where he not only speaks of Christ, but even personates him, says, "All the ends of the earth shall remember themselves and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations, [Psalm 22:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.27);" and, in another Psalm, which is altogether on this subject, he says, "Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea; all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him! [Psalm 72:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.8); [Psalm 72:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.11); [Psalm 72:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.17)."

To cite what *Isaiah*speaks to this effect, would be to repeat whole chapters, See Isaiah 49, 60.

*Jeremiah*, confirming at the same time the truth we have before insisted on, that true religion consists in the knowledge of the Lord, says, "In that day they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them, says the Lord! [Jeremiah 31:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.34)."

*Daniel*assures us, that "the kingdom which God himself will then erect, shall break in pieces all adverse powers, and fill the whole earth, [Daniel 2:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.44)."

*Zechariah*tells us, that "Holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the very bells of the horses; that the most common things in every place shall be consecrated, as it were, to God in their daily use; and that there shall then be no more Canaanites in the house of the Lord Almighty [Zechariah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.20-21)."

The *apostles*also, and our Lord himself, add their testimony. The apostle Paul affirms, not only that "the fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in," but that "the Jews shall be again engrafted on their own olive-tree, [Romans 11:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.24-25)."

*Our Lord*says, that all, Jews and Gentiles, "shall be one fold under one shepherd, [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.16)."

The apostle *John*, passing over the intermediate space of time, represents the angels in Heaven as already rejoicing in the accomplishment of this event, and saying, "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever! [Revelation 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15)."

***~~2. The knowledge of the Lord in that day will be deep in its degree.~~***

The knowledge which the Jews enjoyed was very contracted; ours, since the completion of the canon of Scripture, is considerably enlarged; insomuch that the least of true Christians is, in respect of knowledge, greater than even John the Baptist, who was himself the greatest of all the prophets, [Matthew 11:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.11).

But *in that day*the light will shine far brighter; and the knowledge of all true converts will be, in comparison with ours, as the ocean's depth to a shallow stream. This also is declared with very abundant evidence in the prophetic writings. "The veil that is spread over all nations, is then to be taken away, [Isaiah 25:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.7)." Nor are any, whose eyes are opened, to have an indistinct view of the truth; the Prophet Isaiah says, "the eyes of those who see shall not be dim, and the ears of those who hear shall hearken; the heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly, [Isaiah 32:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.3-4)."

In another place the prophet supposes men to have received a stroke or wound upon their eyes, and that, by the healing of that wound, a vast increase of light shall shine into their minds, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

To mention no more passages, the same prophet represents the saints in that day as seeing Christ, not as in a shadow, like the Jews, nor as in a mirror, like us—but eye to eye, and face to face, "Then shall they see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion, [Isaiah 52:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.8)."

***~~Inferences:~~***

***~~1. What a glorious period will the millennium be!~~***

The time referred to in the text is often called the millennium, because it is to last a thousand years. And how blessed will be the state of the world during that period! How will the whole face of the earth be changed! The description of it in the preceding context, *figurative*as it is—will be almost literally accomplished; men, as savage as the most ferocious animals, will be transformed into meek and lowly followers of the Lamb. No more wars, no more enslaving of our fellow-creatures, no more public feuds or private animosities; all will be love, "there will be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, verse 6-9."

O that the day were already come! O that "God would hasten it in his time!" But, if we cannot be privileged to see it, let us at least help it forward by every means in our power; let us diffuse the savor of the knowledge of Christ in every place; and exert all our influence to send the light of the Gospel to the heathen world, until "Ethiopia herself shall stretch out her hands unto God."

***~~2. How thankful should we be for that little knowledge, with which God, in his mercy, has now favored us!~~***

Surely God has not left himself without witness among us, but "has given testimony to the Word of his grace," and evinced its quickening, transforming efficacy. Doubtless there are some among us, whose dispositions and habits were once as adverse to the Gospel, as the wolf is to a lamb, who now harmoniously unite with the saints of God, and approve themselves to the world as new creatures. *Until they knew the Lord, nothing could effectually tame their spirits, much less transform them into the divine image; but since the light of divine truth has shined into their hearts, they have enjoyed the peace, and exercised the love, and maintained the purity of God's dear children*. Let such then be thankful fur the distinguished mercies given unto them; let them remember that "all things, which pertain unto life and godliness, are communicated to us through the knowledge of Christ! [2 Peter 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.3);" and let them seek to "grow both in grace and knowledge," until from "beholding Christ only as in a looking-glass darkly," they shall "see him as they are seen, and know him as they are known! 1 Corinthians 13:12."

***~~#878~~***

***~~CHRIST A STANDARD FOR THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10)~~***

"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." KJV

"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious!" NIV

In the Scriptures, you frequently see a particular period referred to under the designation of "that day." This term very generally marks the season of the Messiah's coming; of which season the prophet speaks in the words before us.

In the preceding chapter he has predicted the total destruction of the Assyrian empire, which, having already brought into captivity the ten tribes, now threatened, with every prospect of success, the other two tribes, which had been reduced to the lowest ebb of weakness and misery, "The Lord, the Lord Almighty shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled; and he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron; and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one."

Then, in the beginning of this chapter, he declares, that, while Assyria should be destroyed to rise no more, the Messiah should rise from the family of David, when it should have sunk to a state of utter insignificance, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." He mentions the stem of Jesse, rather than of David; because David was a powerful monarch; whereas Jesse, his father, was but a private individual of low rank.

Then, in my text, he repeats that same prophecy, saying, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." Now that this refers to Christ there can be no doubt; since an inspired Apostle, speaking of Christ as having come in order "that the Gentiles should glorify God for his mercy," quotes this very passage, "Again Isaiah says, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust, [Romans 15:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.12),"

With this inspired explanation of my text for our guidance, we may proceed to consider,

***~~I. The coming of Christ as here announced.~~***

We are told, that "He shall stand for an ensign of the people." Now what is "an ensign?" It is a standard raised by the authority of a monarch, inviting his subjects to flock unto it, and to fight under his guidance against his enemies. (In other words, ensign a banner lifted up to be the rallying point of an army or people.)

***~~Now such an occasion existed before Christ came into the world, and still exists in every quarter of the globe.~~***

Behold, the whole universe has risen up in rebellion against "the Lord and his Christ." I confidently ask, Who among you has not been a rebel against God? Who has not trampled on his laws, and set at defiance his authority? Who has not said, respecting the Lord Jesus Christ in particular, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" Who has not ranged himself under the banner of Beelzebub, and executed his will in direct opposition to Christ's? It is not for nothing that Satan is called "The god of this world;" for "he works in all the children of disobedience," and "leads them captive at his will!"

***~~To meet that occasion, Christ has come into the world.~~***

He "comes to effect deliverance for the captives." He erects his standard in the world. He bids us to throw down the weapons of our rebellion, and to join his ranks against the common enemy. He gives us armor from head to foot; and offers to discipline us for the warfare; and assures us of final victory. Nor is it to those only who are in full vigor of life, and among the lower ranks of society, that He sends his invitation; but to those of every rank, and every age. There is with him no preference of age or gender; all are equally called to fight his battles; and are assured of ultimate success.

Nor is it in this, as in common warfare, that those who fight endanger their lives; and those who stay at home consult their safety. On the contrary, those who fight shall both conquer and live forever; but those who decline the combat shall assuredly and eternally perish!

Though Christ's coming, in this view of it, appears formidable, we shall rejoice in it, if we consider,

***~~II. The blessedness arising from it.~~***

To all who view it aright, shall this blessedness be sooner or later given. For,

***~~1. The whole Gentile world shall in due time be subdued to him!~~***

"To him shall the Gentiles seek." Thousands and millions were converted to him in the apostolic age. The whole Roman empire was, within the space of a few years, filled with those who had flocked to his standard. And still is his kingdom advancing in the world. In the very place where we are, I trust, there are not a few whom "God has brought from the kingdom of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son."

But the time is near at hand when "all kings shall fall down before our Lord, and all nations shall serve him;" yes, "all the kingdoms of the world will be subdued to him," and become a part of his universal empire. Now there are kings many and lords many; but "The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name! [Zechariah 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.9)"

Only then contemplate the change which has taken place in anyone regenerate soul, and then say, whether this reign of Christ over the whole race of man is not an event greatly to be desired.

***~~2. "His rest" after all these conflicts shall be "glorious".~~***

Here is no change of metaphor, as a superficial observer would imagine. When this Mighty Warrior went to deliver his people from their captivity in *Egypt*, he "brought them forth with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm."

And, when he subdued their enemies in *Canaan*, he abode by the ark (the symbol of his presence) even for five hundred years, "between curtains" in the tabernacle, moving about from place to place. But David then prepared for him a settled habitation on Mount Zion, and said, in reference to it, "Arise, O Lord, into your rest, you and the ark of your strength. For the Lord, having chosen Zion, and desired it for his habitation, has said, that is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it, [Psalm 132:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 132.8); [Psalm 132:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 132.13-14)." Such was David's testimony; and similar expressions did Solomon also use, when he had deposited the ark in the sanctuary of his temple, [2 Chronicles 6:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 6.41).

But since Christ has come, he has a far nobler rest, even in the bosoms of his obedient people; a rest, in comparison with which the temple of Solomon in all its glory was contemptible, [Isaiah 57:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.17); [Isaiah 66:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.1-2).

Truly this rest is glorious indeed; for here he grants far brighter manifestations of his *glory*, and incomparably richer communications of his *grace*. The glory that filled the temple, so that the priests could no longer stand to minister there, infinitely excelled all that the temple itself contained; but, in comparison with the discoveries which God grants to his believing people, it was darkness itself.

See the Lord Jesus as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" see the glory of God beaming in his face, and all the divine perfections shining with harmonious and united splendor in the work he has accomplished, and you will readily perceive how *far brighter are the discoveries of Christ now made to the believing soul, than all that ever were given to men before his coming*. The grace, the mercy, the peace, the joy, the strength, which animated some highly favored souls before this time, were indeed very abundant; but as a general communication to his Church of old, these gifts were but as a drop before the shower; for "the Spirit was not then given, because Jesus was not then glorified." So truly does he now "glorify the house of his glory, and make the place of his feet glorious! [Isaiah 60:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.7); [Isaiah 60:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.13)."

***~~We may see from hence,~~***

***~~1. What improvement we should make of the preached Gospel.~~***

The preaching of the Gospel is, in fact, the raising of this standard before the eyes of men; it is the setting forth of Christ crucified, and the calling of man to enlist under his banners. What then have we to do, but to flock around him; to give up our names to him, that they may be inscribed on his list; and to gird ourselves for the combat at his command?

Let us then vie with each other in zeal for his service; and let us willingly "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," that, being more than conquerors, we may receive a crown of righteousness at the hands of our righteous Judge! [2 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.8).

***~~2. The blessedness of those who received the preached Gospel unto salvation.~~***

Whoever complies with the invitations of the Gospel, and unites himself to the army of saints, the Church of God, he instantly becomes a distinguished favorite of Heaven; his heart is the temple of God; he is God's residence, he is God's rest; and more glorious is he, than if all earthly dignities were centered in him; more happy, than a combination of all earthly comforts could make him.

Let us then aspire after "the good of God's chosen ones, that we may rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and glory with his inheritance! [Psalm 106:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 106.5)."

***~~#879~~***

***~~THE BELIEVER'S SONG~~***

***~~[Isaiah 12:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.1-2)~~***

"In that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise you; though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me. Behold. God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." KJV

"In that day you will say: I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation!" NIV

Glorious prospects are open to our poor benighted world. The time is coming, and we trust it is not far distant, when "all the kingdoms of the world, whether of Jews or Gentiles, shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ!" "The Root of Jesse," the Lord Jesus Christ, does already "stand as an ensign to the Gentiles;" and though but few, comparatively, have flocked to his standard yet, he shall "gather to him all nations" before long, and "his rest shall be glorious! [Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10)."

His ancient people, too, shall return to him, and experience at his hands mercies similar to those with which they were favored in the day that they came forth put of the land of Egypt, [Isaiah 11:11-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.11-16). For them all, and especially for the latter, is this song prepared; and it shall be sung by them with most exalted joy.

But we need not wait until that day; for every redeemed soul is authorized to adopt it, as expressing his own feelings in the contemplation of the blessings given unto him.

To assist you in the attainment of this heavenly frame, I will show,

***~~I. That praise is the proper employment of the whole intelligent creation.~~***

When God first called forth the universe into existence, he made everything for the glory of his own great name; and to this hour, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge! [Psalm 19:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.1-2)."

While these inferior works unconsciously proclaim his praise, his intelligent creatures more especially engage in this delightful work; and, so far as they are restored to their original state, account it their highest happiness to glorify their God! [Psalm 145:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.10).

Conceive of our first parents in Paradise; how, may we suppose, were their minds occupied, while they retained their original innocency? No doubt they contemplated, with incessant admiration, the perfections of Him to whom they owed their existence, and the obligations conferred upon them above all the rest of the creation, the angels alone excepted.

Now, what reason is there why *our*employment should not accord with theirs? Be it granted, that we have cares and labors, to which they, in their state of innocence, were strangers; after their fall, they were no strangers either to the one or to the other; yet we cannot doubt out that they endeavored to blend these holy feelings with their daily occupations; and, instead of complaining of religion as a task, they found in the exercise of it their richest solace and support. In this, all the most eminent saints have resembled them.

*David*, especially, was in the habit of praising God, as it were, "all the day long," and of putting forth all the powers of his soul in that holy exercise, [Psalm 35:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.28); [Psalm 103:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.1-2).

Doubtless it is necessary for *us*to pour out also our supplications before the Most High; yes, we should "pray without ceasing;" but yet should we also "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us! [1 Thessalonians 5:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.17-18)." The *attributes of God*are still the same as ever, and our obligations to him are the same; or rather, they are infinitely increased; inasmuch as the gift of his only dear Son to die for us, is, in comparison with all other gifts, as the radiance of the sun when compared with the twinkling of a star. I do not say then too much, when I affirm, that "praise is lovely for the upright! [Psalm 33:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 33.1);" and that it is no less our happiness than our duty to abound in it, every day, and all the day long.

In truth, this is the felicity of Heaven; for all the hosts, whether of saints or angels, are engaged continually in this one employment of singing praises unto God; the one, for all the wonders of redeeming love; and the other, for the blessed experience which they have of it in their own souls, "And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! [Revelation 5:8-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.8-13)."

That you may enter upon this blessed work without delay, I proceed to show,

***~~II. What abundant occasion for it there is to the redeemed soul.~~***

**1.** **The mercies given to every true convert are here set forth in a way of *simple acknowledgment*.**

With every soul of man has God been angry, seeing that there is not one of all the human race that has not violated his holy laws. But, when we seek for mercy at his hands in his Son's name, "he turns away from us his anger," and "sheds abroad in our hearts a sense of his love".

Say now, whether one so "comforted" has not reason to bless and adore his God? See the soul when trembling through dread of his displeasure; see it when first the light of God's reconciled countenance is lifted up upon it; see it when the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is sent forth to dwell in it as his temple, and to manifest unto it all the riches of redeeming grace. Has such a one no ground for praise and joy? Truly, "if he should hold his peace, the very stones would cry out against him!"

**2.** **The mercies given to every true convert are here set forth in a way of *exultation*and *triumph*.**

"Behold, God is my salvation!" says the believing soul. How wonderful a truth! Methinks, if it were not uttered by the voice of inspiration, one would be almost ready to call it blasphemy. What! Is God, even the Most High God, our salvation? Yes! And not our Savior only, but salvation itself; inasmuch as He dwells in us, and abides in us, and "works all our works in us."

Hence the believing soul further adds, "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation." This is blessing not future, but present; not hoped for, but actually possessed. The Lord God, Almighty himself has undertaken to save us. Yes, our Savior is no other than God incarnate, "God with us," "God manifest in the flesh," and "purchasing the Church with his own blood." Everything that was necessary for our reconciliation with God, He wrought for us on the cross; and everything that is necessary to make us fit for our inheritance, He works in us, by his Holy Spirit; so that, while he is "our strength, he is also our song" from day to day.

I ask then: Is here no cause to praise our God? The wonder is, that any person, thus favored, can find time for any other employment, or have any inclination to utter a word which has not a direct reference to these mercies.

In our text, we further see,

***~~III. What is that frame of mind with which our praise should ever be accompanied.~~***

***~~Many will be the trials of a Christian, notwithstanding all that he is privileged to enjoy.~~***

Still will he have many conflicts with his indwelling corruptions; and be constrained, at times, to cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Satan, too, that hateful and subtle adversary of God and man, will surely assault him with all manner of temptations; insomuch, that, if God were not to uphold him, he could never stand. Nor will he find light difficulties even from his fellow-creatures, who will exert themselves to the uttermost, both by fraud and violence, to obstruct his way.

***~~But, in the midst of all, his heart will be stayed upon the Lord.~~***

"I will trust, and not be afraid," is the continued language of his soul. He knows in whom he has believed; and that his God is "able to keep that which he has committed to him!" Yes, and pledged also, to "save to the uttermost all that come to him in his Son's name." Hence he says, "The Lord is my strength and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid? [Psalm 27:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.1)." "If God is for me, then who can be against me?" Thus is "his heart fixed, trusting in the Lord;" and he goes forth to his daily conflicts assured of victory, yes, assured that he shall be "more than conqueror through him who loved him!"

***~~Application.~~***

***~~1. Let me take up a lamentation over those who have never experienced the day of salvation.~~***

How many of us are there who are not even sensible that God is angry with them, or that, consequently, have never cried to him in earnest to turn away his displeasure? Let each consult the records of his own heart, and say whether this is not his unhappy condition? Yes, truly, there are many among us, it is to be feared, who have never, in their whole lives, shed one tear for their sins, nor ever uttered one cry to God for the remission of them!

And what must I say to you? I have no wish to lay upon you more guilt than you have contracted; but you all are sinners before God, and as sinners, are liable to his wrath. You all therefore need to repent of your sins, and to implore mercy at the hands of your offended God, in the name and through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you have not done this in sincerity and truth, you are at this moment "under condemnation, and the wrath of God abides on you! [John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.18); [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36)."

As to the *consolations*of God's Spirit, you are as much strangers to them as if no such blessings ever were given to mortal man. Were you to hear one speaking of the manifestations of God's presence to his soul, and of a sense of God's love shed abroad in his heart, you would account it all enthusiasm and delusion.

Say, then, whether you be not in a most deplorable condition? For, if God's anger be not turned away from you here, do you suppose it shall be in the eternal world? No, indeed; you will there have to endure his frowns to all eternity, and to "drink of the cup of his indignation forever and ever."

May the Lord avert from every one of you this fearful doom! But remember, that until your experience accords in good measure with that described in my text, you have not any scriptural hope of happiness in the realms of bliss.*It is in vain to think that you shall spend eternity in songs of praise, when you have never had your hearts tuned to them in this present life.*

***~~2. Offer my commendation to those with whom this day of salvation has commenced.~~***

Though, as far as respects God's ancient people and the world at large, this day is yet distant; but to the real Christian it is already come; as many of you, I trust, can attest. And what terms can I find sufficient to express the commendations due to you? Carnal friends will commend you on the acquisition of wealth and honor; but if crowns and kingdoms had been given you, I should account them of no value in comparison with the blessings which you enjoy:  
Pardon of all sin,  
peace with God,  
the consolations of his Spirit,  
and the prospect of his glory!

What on earth can be compared with these blessings? The things of this world, in comparison with all this, are but as the small dust upon the balance. I ask not, whether you possess any earthly comfort; if God Himself is yours, what can you lack? If "God is your strength, your song, and your salvation," truly you have Heaven already begun in your souls!

Know then, your blessedness, and estimate it aright; and not only "say, O Lord, I will praise you," but do it with your whole hearts; do it with your whole souls; and do it, not only with your lips, but in your lives; by giving up yourselves to His service, and by walking before him in righteousness and holiness, without ceasing, and without reserve!

***~~#880~~***

***~~THE WELLS OF SALVATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.3)~~***

"With joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation."

*We do not wonder that the Scriptures are read with so little interest by the generality; for, until people know somewhat of their lost estate, and of the way of salvation provided for them, the Bible is to them a sealed book. But let them once experience a taste of Christ's redeeming love, and instantly they will find in the inspired volume mines of wealth! Such a storehouse is that blessed book to the godly in this day*.

And such will it be to the Jewish Church, when once they shall be converted to the faith of Christ. "In that day they will say, O Lord, I will praise you; though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me." (Such will be the reflections at the time of their first discoveries of God's mercy to them in Christ Jesus. Then they will advance farther to express their full confidence in God.) "Behold, God is my salvation! I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation." (Then will they be fully prepared to derive the richest benefit from the Scriptures; and) "therefore shall they draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation."

That we may form a just estimate of their privilege, let us consider,

***~~I. The character by which the Scriptures are here designated.~~***

The expression, "wells of salvation," is supposed by many to be spoken of Christ; and surely it may be very fitly applied to him. But I rather understand it of *the Scriptures, from whence, as from an inexhaustible fountain, all true comfort flows*. They eminently deserve that name,

***~~1. As containing in themselves all the blessings of salvation.~~***

In the Scriptures, the whole of salvation,  
as planned in the Divine counsels from all eternity,  
as executed for us by the Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnate state,  
as still carried on by him at the right hand of his Father,  
and as offered through him to every man,  
is there fully contained.

"This mystery of Godliness was indeed kept secret since the world began; but now it is made manifest; and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, [Romans 16:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.25-26)."

Now let anyone contemplate this mystery, and endeavor to explore the wisdom, the love, the mercy, and the grace contained in it; how surpassing all finite comprehension will they be found! Truly, the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this mystery, and of the wonders contained in it, are utterly unsearchable; and the blessings flowing from it are a plenteous and perennial spring, for the refreshment of all on earth, and of all in Heaven.

**2. As revealing them for our use.**

In the whole world besides, there is not to be found one drop of water to satisfy a thirsty soul. Where can one look that is oppressed with a sense of guilt? Where, one who is mourning over the corruptions of his nature? Go to those who have not the Scriptures; go to even the wisest philosophers of Greece and Rome; and see how vain were all their expedients for pacifying a guilty soul, or purifying a polluted soul.

But in the Scriptures we find all that a sinner can desire—forgiveness for all our sins, and a glorious eternal inheritance!

In them are promises suited to every condition incident to our fallen nature; as suited to refresh the soul, as water is to allay our thirst. Conceive of every need with which a sinner can be oppressed, and the appropriate relief will there be found.

***~~3. As actually imparting them to our souls.~~***

As a fountain pours forth its waters, so do the Scriptures impart life, and peace, and strength, to all who go to them as God's appointed channel of grace to their souls. They have within themselves a life-giving virtue, [John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.10); so that, when brought home and applied by the Spirit of God, they quicken the dead soul, and give a vital energy to all our powers. They are able, not only to "make men wise unto salvation, [2 Timothy 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.15)," but to impart salvation itself, being:  
"like fire" to consume dross,  
and "a hammer to break the rock in pieces, [Jeremiah 23:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.29),"  
and "a two-edged sword to pierce the very inmost soul [Hebrews 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.12),"  
and "a weapon to destroy every enemy, [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.4-5)." They have a power to enlighten the darkest mind, [Psalm 19:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.7-8), and to sanctify all on whom they operate aright, [John 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.3); [John 17:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.19);  
and so to sanctify them, as to prepare them for the perfect fruition of their God, [Ephesians 5:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.26-27).

Think then of,

***~~II. The blessedness of having access to them.~~***

Truly we should never contemplate them but with joy, on account of,

***~~1. The freeness with which we may approach them.~~***

There is no prohibition to any man under Heaven. About wells that have been dug for a supply of common water, there have been the fiercest contentions, [Genesis 26:18-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 26.18-21); but these are public property, and equally accessible to all; none have to "pay for this water," as Israel had, [Numbers 20:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 20.19); it is to be had "without money and without price, [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

True indeed it is that there are many Protestants as well as papists, who would bar our access to them; but God has given to all an equal right to come to them; for his invitation is, "Let him who is athirst come; and whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely! [Revelation 22:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.17)."

***~~2. The ease with which we may draw from them.~~***

There are those who think it in vain for the poor to come to them, seeing that "the wells are deep, and they have nothing to draw with, [John 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.11)." But be it known, that however valuable *learning*may be for the attaining of a critical acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, it is not at all necessary for a spiritual perception of their truths. It is *faith*, and not learning, that is needed for that end. All the learning in the universe will not impart to us a spiritual discernment, any more than it will furnish us with any physical organs. It is faith alone that will avail us here. That discerns the things which are not visible to mortal eyes; and will go to the very bottom of these wells, and draw from thence the most refreshing consolations!

***~~3. The abundance that we may receive out of them.~~***

When the rock was struck by Moses, the waters gushed out in such abundance, that the whole camp of Israel, with all their cattle, could drink thereof. And, if all the sinners in the universe will go to these wells, they shall find no lack for the supply of their most enlarged necessities. Our Lord says, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink; and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water! [John 7:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-38)." Indeed, *the more intense and ardent your thirst is, the more abundant shall be the blessings which you shall derive from them.*

***~~4. The perfect satisfaction that we may find in them.~~***

"Whoever drinks of other waters will thirst again; but whoever drinks of these wells, will never thirst; for the water which he has received will be in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life! [John 4:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.13-14), [Isaiah 49:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.9-10)."

I may appeal to all, whether the most copious draughts of carnal pleasure ever satisfied? Solomon, who drank as deep of it as a human being could do, pronounced it all to be vanity and vexation of spirit. "The eye was never yet satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing."

But he who has obtained the knowledge of Christ, and drunk deep of the promises of the Gospel, has no longer any relish for earthly vanities, nor any desire after them. Give him all the world, and he feels empty; give him the presence of God, and he desires no more!

**ADDRESS.**

***~~1. Those who are going to broken cisterns.~~***

What is all worldly pleasure but "a broken cistern that can hold no water?" And will you for this forsake "the fountain of living waters! [Jeremiah 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.13)." Let me prevail on every one of you to go to God as your reconciled God in Christ Jesus, and to say with David, "All my fresh springs are in you! [Psalm 87:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.7).

***~~2. Those who are drinking from "the fountain of life [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9)."~~***

Say whether you have not "a joy with which the stranger intermeddles not?" Say whether the fountains do not richly supply you; and whether, even on the highest places, which, according to human apprehension, are inaccessible to rivers, the rivers do not follow you, [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18). Yes, until you arrive at Heaven itself, the streams shall never fail; and even there shall they run beside you for your comfort to eternal ages! [Revelation 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.17).

***~~#881~~***

***~~THE BELIEVER'S SONG~~***

***~~[Isaiah 12:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.3-6)~~***

"With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall you say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he has done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, you inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you." KJV

"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you." NIV

The restoration of the Jews, and their union with the Gentiles under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ—is foretold so plainly by the inspired writers, that we have no doubt at all but that it shall be accomplished in due season. The prediction contained in the foregoing chapter is peculiarly full and express. It relates not to Judah only, but to the ten tribes also; who shall be brought from Assyria, as the other two tribes once were from Babylon. The ensign to which they will flock, is that of the Son of Jesse, the Lord Jesus, [Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10); [Isaiah 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.12); and the joy excited in their bosoms will be like that which their fathers felt at their deliverance from Egypt, when they beheld all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore.

The chapter before us is a song, which shall be sung on that occasion by the whole assembly of the Lord's people; and in it we see,

***~~I. Their high privilege.~~***

The learned prelate to whom the world is so much indebted for his translation of the Prophecies of Isaiah, renders the first verse of our text, not, "Therefore you shall draw," but, "When you shall draw;" which all will do in the day to which our text refers. But,

***~~There are wells of salvation now open unto us.~~***

Often is our blessed Lord and Savior represented under the image of a well or fountain, [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9). [Zechariah 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.1). Another view of the subject is here taken, different from that in the preceding discourse. As the precise import of the "wells" is not determined in Scripture, it may be taken either way. And Jesus himself, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, assumed, as it were, that title [John 4:6-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.6-14). Moreover, the very passage from whence our text is taken was applied by him to himself.

At the feast of Tabernacles a custom prevailed, which will fully illustrate our text. The people on the last day of that feast used to go in procession, and draw water from the pool of Siloam, and then to mix it with wine, and pour it on the sacrifices. There was no direction for this in the law of Moses; but the custom was instituted by the Jews themselves after their return from the Babylonish captivity, with a reference to this prophecy which we are now considering. On the day of this ceremony, Jesus stood in the place where the procession was passing, and cried, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink! [John 7:37-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-40);" as if he had said, 'I am the person spoken of by the Prophet, and the person whom you profess to expect; and, if you will believe in me, I will give you my Holy Spirit in such abundance, as shall be effectual for your present peace, and your everlasting salvation.'

Indeed,  
his person, (as God-man,)  
his work, (even his whole obedience unto death,)  
his offices, (as our Great High **Priest**that makes atonement for us, our **King**that rules over us and in us, and our **Prophet**that guides us into all truth,) may all be considered as so many wells from whence our salvation flows.

Yes, his Word also, and ordinances, may be considered in the same light, because from them we draw all the instruction, the grace, the consolation, that we stand in need of.

***~~From these we may draw water with joy.~~***

Truly there is nothing which can conduce to our salvation, which is not to be found in Christ. *The water that he will give us will cleanse us at once from all the guilt and defilement of sin; it will purify our very nature, so that we shall be renewed after the Divine image in righteousness and true holiness*."

From him *all*may draw. Not a sinner in the universe is so unworthy, but that he may come to Christ, and by faith receive from him whatever he stands in need of. The invitation is given to "all who thirst"—no qualification is required on their part, except a sincere desire and a humble faith; they may take as much as they can wish freely, "without money and without price, [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

They are not in the situation of Hagar, who when she relieved her son's thirst from the small vessel that she had taken, grudged, as it were, every drop that was expended, because she knew not where to obtain enough to satisfy his returning needs, which would speedily arise; they may come and draw "with joy," knowing that *the supply is inexhaustible, and perfectly commensurate with all their needs*.

The very first taste of this water shall so invigorate their souls, that they shall feel "like a giant refreshed with wine;" and every successive draught shall "strengthen them with might in their inner man," and "fill them, as it were, with all the fullness of God, [Ephesians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.19)."

But the true virtue of this fountain will be best seen in,

***~~II. Their heavenly employment.~~***

There is a remarkable difference between the two parts of this divine song; in that which precedes our text, the expressions relate entirely to the case of the individual himself; but, in the text, the individual rises to the concerns of others, and becomes, as it were, a preacher to all around him. Hence then we see the employment of all true Christians:

***~~1. They glorify God themselves.~~***

The first thought of their hearts is that of humble gratitude for the unspeakable mercy of reconciliation with God.

They look back, and see the innumerable offences whereby they have excited the displeasure of Almighty God, and how justly they might have been made monuments of his wrathful indignation!

They contemplate the state of those who have died in their sins, and wonder that they themselves are not now taking their portion with them!

They then contrast the blessed state to which they themselves are brought through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

They behold God as reconciled to them through the blood of his cross; and with inexpressible comfort are enabled to address him by the endearing name of *Father*. In the view of these things they exclaim with profoundest adoration, "O Lord, I will praise you; for though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me."

From thence they proceed to glory in God with unshaken trust; for, What can they lack who have God himself for their salvation? "If God be for them, who can be against them?" "Jehovah himself is their strength," "dwelling in them," "working in them mightily," and "enabling them always to triumph in Christ."

Shall he not then be "their Song?" Yes, "they know in whom they have believed;" they know his power, and love; his faithfulness and truth; and therefore, though on the field of battle, they assure themselves of victory, and anticipate with unspeakable joy, the final outcome of their conflicts. Not that they are blind to the difficulties which they have to encounter, or ignorant of the enemies they have to contend with; but they see Jehovah himself engaged for them by covenant and by oath; and in the confidence that he will never leave them nor forsake them, they say, "I will trust and not be afraid;" "being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ! [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)."

They stir up others to glorify him also. Having a light kindled in their souls, they "do not put it under a basket, but set it on a lampstand," that others may see their light. They burn with zeal for God, and would gladly extend the knowledge of him to the ends of the earth. They are filled with love also to their fellow-creatures; and would not have one to perish, if by any means they might be instrumental to the salvation of his soul.

Towards the household of faith in particular they feel an ardent desire to promote their advancement in all that is "lovely and of good report." Hence they exhort one another to abound in praise and thanksgiving to their common Lord and Savior; they urge one another to "call upon him," to "declare his name," to make known his love, to commend him to the whole world. They would have all to "sing unto Him" "with thanksgiving and the voice of melody." They cannot endure the thought that "an inhabitant of Zion" should be silent; they would have every believer to cry out and shout," so that, were it possible, the whole universe might hear.

They remind each other of the great things which the Savior has done, and is yet doing, for his Church and people. They delight to speak of "the excellent things" which he has done, in assuming our nature, and dying in our stead, and working out for us a free and full salvation; and they rejoice no less to contemplate, how "great the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of them," and how certainly he will put down all their enemies, and "bruise Satan himself under their feet."

These are things which are the daily subject of their thoughts, their conversation, and their praise; and in proportion as any are endued with his grace, they will infallibly abound in these holy exercises.

***~~Learn then from hence,~~***

***~~1. How great a matter is the salvation of the soul.~~***

Many think of it as a matter of course; but not so the person who has been taught of God; he sees that it is a miracle of mercy that any child of man is saved. *That he himself has obtained mercy, is to the true Christian a source of wonder and amazement.*That God should ever look upon him, and pardon him, and save him!—he knows not how to express his sense of such amazing love. He would have "the rocks and hills to break forth into singing, and all the trees of the wood to clap their hands with joy." And if we have never thus been penetrated with a sense of God's unbounded love, we are yet strangers to the salvation he has wrought out!

***~~2. How precious is Christ to all who know him.~~***

Mere nominal Christians can think and speak of him without emotion; but not so the people who "have tasted of his grace;" they can never find words whereby to express their love and gratitude to their adorable Benefactor. They are ashamed that they can ever think or speak of anything else. "To them indeed he is precious;" and, if they could have their desire, they would love him, and serve him, and glorify him, on earth—even as the glorified saints are doing it in Heaven.

Is this your experience, my beloved brethren? Does the whole universe appear to you but "as a broken cistern," and is Christ the only fountain from whence you desire to draw? O that you may be able more and more to say, "All my fresh springs are in you! [Psalm 87:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.7)."

***~~3. How happy is the Christian's state.~~***

Doubtless there is a great diversity in men's attainments; there are babes, and young men, and fathers in the family of Christ. But in this there is a resemblance among them all; they are full of gratitude to their incarnate God; and all their hope is in his power and grace.

They are also active in diffusing the knowledge of him. They will not spend their time in disputing about matters of doubtful disputation, whether relating to doctrines, or to sects and parties, but will labor to promote the glory of their God. Whether they be ministers or not, they will all be priests in their own families, and all be anxious to guide their friends and neighbors to the knowledge of the truth. *Having experienced the life-giving virtue of that fountain, will they see their neighbors perishing with thirst, and not point it out?*No; they will desire that others should "receive out of the fullness that is in Christ," and would have "all flesh to see the salvation of God."

***~~#882~~***

***~~THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 14:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.2)~~***

KJV "They shall take them captives whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors."

NIV "They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors!"

In the midst of the prophecies relating to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, we shall find many expressions which necessitate us to look forward to some other event for their full accomplishment. The destruction of Babylon is undoubtedly the subject of this and of the preceding chapter. The whole forms one prophecy, abounding with the most beautiful imagery, and, in point of composition, equaling, if not excelling, the most admired poems of antiquity.

But if we could confine the preceding part of this verse, and the verse before it, to that event, (which yet we cannot with any propriety,) what must we do with the words before us? They were never accomplished at that period; the Jews did not carry the Babylonians into captivity; nor at any subsequent period did they rule over them.

But if we understand these words as looking forward to another redemption, then they will be easy; and their accomplishment will be seen, not only in the Church at large, but in every individual member of it. The grace of Christ triumphed over all its opponents in the apostolic age; and will, in a yet more extensive manner, in the millennial period. The peculiar way in which his grace triumphs, is a subject worthy of our more particular attention; and the words of our text afford us a fit occasion for setting it before you. We shall,

**I. Trace a work of grace on the souls of men.**

Taking such a view of it as is suggested by our text, there are four distinct states in which the Christian will successively be found:

***~~1. A state of captivity.~~***

This is the state of every man, before the grace of God enters into his heart. The Jews in Babylon were not more enslaved than we are by nature.

Our principles and actions are altogether in bondage to the world. Nothing appears so free as the mind; yet, in our natural state, we are so shackled with prejudice, that we cannot exercise it aright; we cannot apprehend truth, when it is proposed to us, "the things of the Spirit of God appear even foolishness to us; neither can we receive them," because our faculties are pre-occupied by the current opinions of the world.

Our ways too are under the same constraint. Custom has prescribed the paths in which we shall walk; and we dare not violate its arbitrary laws. Let us even see the light of a bright example set before us. We feel not ourselves at liberty to follow it. As far as fashion authorizes a religious life, we will go; we may perform a round of religious duties; but to cultivate real piety is contrary to our inclination, and beyond our power.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil! [Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.23)."

As the world by its maxims, so sin by its allurements—fetters and controls us! So interwoven with all our faculties is sin, that we cannot resist its influence. Sooner might an Ethiopian change the color of his skin, or a leopard take away its spots—than the natural man break forth from the dominion of sin! Though he may not yield to sin in a gross and shameless way—yet his thoughts and desires are altogether vish-e-ated by it! Nor is so much as one inclination or affection free from its malignant taint. A principle of evil resides within him, and dictates every imagination of his heart!

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually! [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5)."

"Every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood! [Genesis 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 8.21)."

We may observe also, that Satan maintains a tyrannical sway over the natural man, as over his rightful vassal. How he works upon our minds, we cannot exactly say; (for we know not how our own spirit operates upon our material body; and therefore we must not wonder if we cannot declare how that wicked spirit operates on our spirits,) but he certainly does "work in all the children of disobedience," and "lead them captive at his will." And when the grace of God first comes into the soul, it finds us altogether under the power of "that strong man armed."

**2.** **A state of conflict.**

The first entrance of grace into the soul stirs it up immediately to break its bonds, and assert its liberty. The person who is once enlightened to see what masters he has served, and what will be his recompense, is filled with indignation against himself for so long submitting to such ignominious bondage. He first probably begins with efforts made in his own strength; but when he finds how unavailing they are, he will betake himself to prayer, and implore help from above.

Now the sins to which he once addicted himself are resisted; and the very inclinations to them are bitterly bewailed. Now he cannot be satisfied with taking his notions of sin and duty from the world, or with conforming himself to the standard which the world approves; he inquires what God's will is, and determines to renounce whatever is inconsistent with it. He meets with innumerable difficulties, in his new course.

His indwelling corruptions, like a stream obstructed by a dam, threaten to bear down all before them.

Satan exerts himself, by various wiles and devices, to divert him from his purpose.

The world, Satan's best advocate and co-adjutor, labors, by threats or allurements, to keep him under its dominion!

But he gathers strength from opposition, and courage from defeat; and resolves that nothing but victory or death shall put an end to his warfare.

**3.** **A state of victory**.

No person will long continue to oppose his spiritual enemies, without reaping the fruit of his exertions in victory and triumph. After he has once learned to use the armor which God has prepared for him, he finds, to his unspeakable comfort, that none of his enemies can stand before him. The world, that was once so formidable, has lost its power; and neither sin nor Satan can deceive him, as they once did. The grace of Christ is now found sufficient for him; and though he still is violently assaulted with various temptations, he is enabled to repel them "by the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit." Sometimes indeed he is ready to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" but soon he recollects himself, and adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

***~~4. A state of dominion.~~***

This is that state of which the text particularly speaks; and surely it is a state to which many attain. That the warfare will ever cease in this world, we have no reason to expect; but that our progress will be more easy, and our victory more certain, in proportion as we become habituated to the contest, there can be no doubt. As there are babes, young men, and fathers in the family of Christ, so are there among his army some, who have not only gained the victory, but are dividing the spoil.

The*world* is crucified to them; *sin*is mortified, and *Satan*is bruised under their feet.

They are filled with a peace that passes all understanding, and a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. The prize is, by anticipation at least, already in their hands. They enjoy already the pledge of Heaven in their souls; and they are looking forward with delight to that blessed hour when they shall cease from their warfare altogether, and rest forever in the bosom of their Lord.

Though surely many variations will be found in the duration or degree in which the different parts of this experience exist in different people—yet this, on the whole, is the experience of every true believer, he emerges from his natural bondage, and comes forth into the liberty of God's children. Such, I say, is the work of divine grace in the soul; and we shall now proceed to,

***~~II. Make some observations upon it.~~***

***~~1. This work of salvation is a stupendous work.~~***

None but God is equal to it. None but an Almighty Being could have created the universe out of nothing; nor can any other Being create anew the souls of men. Every good soldier of Jesus Christ must say, "He who has wrought us to self-same thing, is God." The power exercised in this work is compared, by Paul, with that which was put forth in the resurrection of Christ, and his establishment on his throne, above all the principalities of Heaven or Hell! [Ephesians 1:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.19-21). Let all then who have within themselves an evidence that they are the subjects of it, rejoice; let them magnify their God in the energetic language of the Psalmist, [Psalm 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.10); and let them "go forth, and show what great things the Lord has done for them."

***~~2. This work of salvation is an effectual work.~~***

We wish not to discourage those who find difficulties in their warfare; but yet we must say, that God does not do his work by halves (if we may so express it). If he begins a good work in any soul, he will not allow Satan to defeat his purpose. "He will give more and more grace," until it proves effectual to the end for which it is given. Grace that is not sufficient, (I mean, that does not finally prevail,) is not true grace.

We know that if a judgment is formed from the actual attainments of the religious world, we shall be ready to think that piety and carnality, and victory and bondage, can consist together. But they cannot; and those who with a religious profession unite a habitual subjection to anyone sin, will feel themselves grievously disappointed in the outcome. "They may dream of plaudits from their Judge; but he will say to them, "I never knew you—depart from Me, you workers of iniquity!" "The weapons of our warfare are sufficiently powerful to cast down all the strongholds of Satan," and to bring even "our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ;" the soldier therefore that yields to anyone of his spiritual enemies, betrays his Lord; and for submitting to the chains of sin, will be bound "in chains of everlasting darkness!"

**3.** **This work of salvation is a work of which none need despair.**

A more desperate state than that described in the text, can scarcely be conceived; they were captives, and captives in a state of grievous oppression; yet they are not only delivered, but made to "rule over their very oppressors." Who then has any reason to despair? We may say perhaps, that our enemies are more powerful than those of others; that by our own consent they have acquired an indisputable right over us; and that therefore we cannot hope for deliverance. But God states, and answers, this very case in [Isaiah 49:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-26). And, not content with this, he makes his readiness to relieve such people a prominent feature in his own character; as if he were especially to be known by it, [Amos 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 5.9). He makes his promises too to this very description of people, [Psalm 72:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.4); [Psalm 72:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.12-13), as though he counted himself most glorified, when the weakness of his people has given the most scope for the exercise of his almighty power, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9). To the weakest then, and to the most desponding, we would say with the prophet, that though "without God the strongest of men should bow down under the prisoners, and fall under the slain, [Isaiah 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.4). [Jeremiah 37:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 37.10)," yet "with him you shall be able to do all things, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13);" even "the lame shall take the prey, [Isaiah 33:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.23)," and "the feet of the poor and of the needy shall tread down their mightiest enemies, [Isaiah 26:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.5-6)."

***~~#883~~***

***~~IMMUTABILITY OF GOD'S COUNSELS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 14:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.26-27)~~***

"This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"

It is common with the Lord, when predicting distant events, to confirm men in the expectation of them by the accomplishment of something near at hand. Thus when God foretold the incarnation of his own Son by the Prophet Isaiah, he foretold also the speedy destruction of the ten tribes, that the fulfillment of the one might excite in their minds an expectation of the other, [Isaiah 7:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.14-16); and when to Hezekiah he promised an addition of fifteen years to his life, he caused the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz to recede ten degrees, as a sign that his life would certainly be prolonged to the period that had been fixed, [Isaiah 38:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.7-8).

Thus, in the chapter from whence our text is taken, and in that which precedes it, a very full and minute prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, and of the consequent restoration of the Jews to their own land, is given two hundred years before it was to be accomplished. But there was another event of great importance speedily to take place, namely, the destruction of the Assyrian army; this therefore is introduced, not merely as an independent prophecy, but as a near event, which would assure to them the accomplishment of those which were more remote. It is in reference to all these events, that the immutability of God's purpose is so strongly declared in our text, but more especially to those events which constitute the main subject of the prophecy.

The immutability of God's decrees is confessedly a very deep and mysterious subject, which we would not enter upon but with fear and trembling. We do not approve of bringing it forward on every occasion, and making it, as some do, the great subject of our ministrations; but we do not feel at liberty to pass it over as if we were afraid of it, or as if we thought the inspired writers had erred in ever bringing it before our eyes. Now that it lies clearly in our way, we will proceed to give it the attention it deserves.

***~~I. The immutability of God's decrees, considered in a general view.~~***

***~~The Scripture continually represents God as having ordained everything from before the foundation of the world.~~***

The apostle James, before the whole college of apostles at Jerusalem, declared this as a truth unquestionably acknowledged by them all, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world! [Acts 15:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.18)." But, if they were known to him, they must be certain; and, if they were certain, it must be because he had ordained them so to be. Hence even the salvation of his people is said to be in consequence of his having elected them in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and predestined them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself. In this he is represented as acting solely according to his own sovereign will, for the praise of the glory of his own grace, in conformity with his own eternal counsels; and all who finally obtain an inheritance in Heaven, are said to have been "predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, that they should be to the praise of his glory! [Ephesians 1:4-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-12)."

Now to conceal, or to explain away, such expressions as these, is certainly not right. That they involve many difficulties, is true; but there are difficulties also on that side of the question which denies the existence of God's decrees; and it is far safer and better to receive with humility the declarations of God which we cannot fully comprehend, than to set ourselves determinately against them, and to impose on them a sense which they were obviously not intended to bear. The man that receives them with childlike simplicity, cannot doubt their general import, though he may doubt respecting inferences which may appear to be deducible from them.

***~~God's decrees, to whatever they relate, are unchangeable.~~***

This also is plainly and strongly declared in the Holy Scriptures. He has confirmed his Word with an oath, on purpose that "the immutability of his counsel may be known, [Hebrews 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17)." If his purposes were changed, it must be either through the inward operation of his own mind, or through the outward operation of something else upon him; but in his own mind he is altogether unchangeable; as he has said, "I the Lord, do not change! [Malachi 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.6);" and James says, that "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17)." Nor can he be wrought upon by anything from without; he cannot be deceived by *subtlety*; for "there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord! [Proverbs 21:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 21.30)." Nor can he be constrained by *force*; for "he does according to his will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand, or say unto him, what are You doing? [Daniel 4:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.35)." In a word, "He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent; has he said, and shall he not do it? has he spoken, and shall he not make it good? [Numbers 23:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 23.19)." Yes, "His counsel shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure, [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.10);" "He is of one mind, and who can turn him? [Job 23:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 23.13)." "His counsel stands forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations! [Psalm 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 33.11)."

***~~II. The immutability of God's decrees, considered in reference to the particular points specified in the context.~~***

It is the practical use of this subject that renders it so interesting to the believer; and it is in that view only that we wish to impress it on our minds. It is introduced by the prophet in reference to two points:

***~~1. The deliverance of God's people.~~***

The state of the Jews in Babylon was as hopeless as could well be conceived; but God foretold their deliverance from it, and their restoration to their own land; and that, though captives and grievously oppressed, "They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors, verses 1, 2." This, God declared to be irreversibly decreed.

Now the same is true respecting the deliverance and salvation of all the Lord's people, in every age and quarter of the world. As the Jews were his chosen nation, so is there now "a remnant according to the election of grace, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6);" a people whom he has given to his Son, [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6); [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9), and to whom, as viewed in him, he gave a "promise of eternal life, before the world began, [Titus 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.2)."

Now these he will search out, wherever they are, even among the remotest Gentiles, [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.16); and in due time he will call them by his grace, [Ezekiel 34:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.11-13), and bring them to the saving knowledge of his truth, [Isaiah 65:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.1). These also will he keep, and not allow so much as one of them ever to be lost [John 17:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.12). For their full and complete salvation God has made abundant provision in his Word. If ever they should perish, it must be through their own departure from him, or through their being wrested out of his hands, or by his casting them off; but on all these heads he has revealed his immutable purpose and decree.

Is it apprehended that they will depart from him? He will "put his fear in their hearts, that they may not do so, [Jeremiah 32:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40)."

Is it feared that either men or devils may wrest them from him? He assures us that "none shall pluck them out of his hands! [John 10:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.27-29)," or "separate them from his love! [Romans 8:33-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.33-39)."

Is it supposed possible that he himself may cast them off and forsake them? He gives the fullest possible assurance to them all:  
that he will not do so, [1 Samuel 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 12.22). [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5-6);  
that "not one of his little ones shall perish [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14);"  
and that, however sifted, "not the smallest grain among them shall ever fall to the ground! [Amos 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.9)."

Their state may appear distressing, and even desperate, for a time; but God will not abandon them to themselves, [Isaiah 54:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.7-10); for "all his promises to them are *yes and Amen*in Christ Jesus, [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20)."

***~~2. The destruction of his enemies.~~***

Babylon, just previous to its destruction, seemed capable of defying all its enemies; but it was destroyed, precisely at the time, and in the manner, and by the person, that had been foretold two hundred years before. Thus, *however secure God's enemies at this day may think themselves, they shall assuredly perish at the appointed time.*

Of the people of God we have spoken as God's elect; but we are not therefore to imagine of God's enemies, that they have from eternity been doomed to destruction. No; though we maintain, and have not a doubt about, the doctrine of election, we do not believe the doctrine of absolute reprobation. It is true, we do not know where to draw the line so as to answer all the questions that may be asked. We acknowledge that we are ignorant, and contentedly ignorant, of many things relating to this mysterious subject; but, in our apprehension, God's oath, "that he wills not the death of any sinner, but rather that he should turn and live," is a satisfactory proof, that he has "not ordained any to wrath," except as the fruit and consequence of their own wickedness.

We apprehend that the true distinction between the elect and non-elect is marked with admirable precision by the Apostle Peter; who speaks of the elect, as saved purely in consequence of God's eternal choice; but of others, as perishing purely through their own obstinate unbelief, to which God has irreversibly decreed a sentence of eternal condemnation, [1 Peter 2:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.7-9). Then the contrast observable in that whole passage will be complete. There is a double antithesis. This is sufficiently plain, that, if God be true—then the unrighteous, and unregenerate, can never enter into the kingdom of Heaven, [1 Corinthians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.9). [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3); [John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.5). We are ready to think that God will rescind his decrees in relation to this matter; but he will not; he will not from pity; for however we may knock, and cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!"—he will not open the door; nor, when "weeping and wailing and gnashing our teeth" with anguish, will he grant us so much as "a drop of water at our request to cool our tongue!"

Nor shall any be able to resist his will; for when he shall say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire," we cannot maintain our ground one moment; nor, if we call on the rocks and mountains to fall upon us, can they afford us the desired aid! Even in this life the infliction of punishment is sometimes irreversibly decreed; and much more shall it be in that day, when God will only laugh at our calamity, and execute upon us all the judgments which he has denounced against us! [Proverbs 1:24-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.24-31). [Ezekiel 24:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 24.13-14).

***~~Reflections.~~***

***~~1. On what a slender foundation are the hopes of the generality fixed!~~***

A strange idea pervades the great mass of the professing Christian world, that God will relax somewhat of his demands, and forbear to act agreeably to the strict tenor of his Word. And, when we urge upon their consciences the strictness of his precepts, or the awfulness of his threatening, they reply, 'God is too merciful to act thus; we have no fear, but that he will relax somewhat of these things in the day of judgment.' Thus they hope that God's purposes shall change; and they contentedly rest their everlasting salvation on this ground. What an amazing infatuation is this!

O, beloved, think well, before you determine to venture your everlasting happiness on such a presumption as this. Know that, in so doing, you absolutely bar Heaven against yourselves; and render it impossible for God himself to save you. True, he can work faith in your hearts; but he can never save you in unbelief, "he cannot deny himself;" and if you will not seek him in his appointed way of faith and holiness, there "remains nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to consume you! [Hebrews 10:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.26-27)."

***~~2. On what an immoveable foundation does the believer stand!~~***

You are fixed upon a rock, against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail. We suppose indeed that you are not affecting to trust in God, while you are negligent in the use of his appointed means; (that would be to trust, not in God, but in a presumptuous unfounded conceit of your own.) But, if you are "fleeing to Christ for refuge," then are you safe in God's everlasting arms; and he desires that you should be assured of this; yes, it is for this very end that he has confirmed his promise with an oath, even that you might be assured of the immutability of his counsel, and be filled with the stronger and richer consolation, [Hebrews 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17).

If a sense of your own weakness and unworthiness discourages you; then know that "God is able to perform all that he has promised," and that the consideration of his power and faithfulness is the very antidote which he himself has provided for all your fears! [Isaiah 49:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-25).

***~~#884~~***

***~~GOD'S CHURCH AND PEOPLE SECURE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 14:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.32)~~***

KJV. "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it."

NIV. "What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation? "The LORD has established Zion, and in her his afflicted people will find refuge."

God is for the most part overlooked in the government of the world; and hence arise an overconfidence among some, and an undue timidity among others. But, *if we viewed God as ordering and overruling everything, even to the falling of a sparrow, we would undertake nothing ourselves without a direct reference to him; nor fear what was undertaken by others, while we had him for our protector*.

This is the great lesson which we are taught in the passage which we have now read. The context contains a prophecy respecting the fate of Palestine. The Philistines had been invaded and conquered by King Uzziah, [2 Chronicles 26:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 26.6); but in the days of Ahaz, Uzziah's son, the Philistines had regained their cities, and take vengeance on the provinces of the Jewish monarch, [2 Chronicles 28:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 28.18). At the accession of Hezekiah to the throne of Judah, they hoped to make yet further inroads on the Jewish territory; and the Prophet Isaiah was inspired to foretell, that they would not only fail in their attempts, but be utterly vanquished by him, whom they so fondly thought to subdue and subjugate.

Read the passage in this view, and the whole address will appear extremely spirited and beautiful. "Do not rejoice Palestine, because the rod of him who smote you is broken;" (that is because you have triumphed over Uzziah's son,) "for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, or adder; and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." (Uzziah bit you only as a common serpent; but his grandson Hezekiah shall inflict a wound as fatal as an adder; and prove as irresistible as a fiery flying serpent.) "And the first-born of the poor (Jews, whom you have so oppressed) shall feed, and the needy (whom you have so terrified) shall lie down in safety; while your root shall be destroyed by famine, and your remnant with the sword." (Instead then of rejoicing, "Howl, O gate; cry, O city; Palestine is dissolved; for there shall come from the north (Judea) a smoke (and dust of an army in full march:) and none shall be alone (or decline serving in this army) at the appointed time." (In the mean time,) "what shall one then answer the messengers of the nation," (when they come, full of alarm and terror.

The general interpretation of their being foreign ambassadors sent to encourage Hezekiah, enervates the whole force of the passage, and is in opposition to the text itself, which speaks of them as the messengers of the nation, and not of foreign nations, announcing your preparations to invade the land of Judah?) Answer, "that the Lord has founded Zion; and the poor of his people shall trust in it;" and that no weapon ever formed against them shall prosper.

The words thus explained we shall consider as proclaiming,

***~~I. An unquestionable fact.~~***

***~~"God has founded Zion".~~***

He has founded it in his eternal counsels; and he has founded it also in his covenant engagements. He determined from all eternity that he would have a Church and people from among the sinners of mankind; and that he would get glory to himself from the introduction of sin into this lower world. For this end he entered into covenant with his co-equal, co-eternal Son; and engaged, that if he would become a man, and "make his own soul an offering for sin," then he would have from among our fallen race, a people, who should be his purchased possession, and should forever show forth his praise, [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10).

This covenant being made, he gave to his Son "a multitude, whom no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues;" and agreed to accomplish in them all his good pleasure, and to bring them in due season to the full possession of that glory, which by their transgressions they had lost. To this the Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly refers, declaring, that he was invested with "power to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him, [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2);" and under this character the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for them, [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9), and committed them into the Father's hands to be kept for him, [John 17:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.11), and declared his assured expectation of having them, in due time, as the trophies of his grace, and the partners of his glory! [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24).

***~~"The poor of his people also shall trust in it".~~***

God never leaves his chosen people to trust in themselves; he never has done it; he never will do it. From the beginning he has made them to feel their need of a Savior; and has caused them to build on "that foundation which he has laid in Zion." The institution of sacrifices even in Paradise (for we doubt not but that the beasts, with the skins of which our first parents were clothed by God himself, had been offered in sacrifice to God) taught them from the beginning to rely, not on themselves, but on a sacrifice which would in due time be offered; and his grace has invariably wrought to the production of this one effect, according to that declaration of the prophet, "Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; and he who believes shall not make haste, or, as Paul interprets it, shall not be ashamed, [Isaiah. 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa. 17.16) with [Romans 9:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.33)."

But in the text there is also contained,

***~~II. An instructive lesson.~~***

It teaches us,

***~~1. That our trust must be on God alone.~~***

To none can we look, but to our Covenant God and Savior. There is no other foundation, but that which God has laid, [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11); nor any other name whereby a human being can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ, [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12). Hence his invitation, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth, [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)." Hence also that solemn declaration, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father, but by me! [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)." To confide in the creature, is to entail only a curse upon ourselves, [Jeremiah 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5).

Why was it that the Jews, with all their earnestness in following after righteousness, could never attain it? It was, because they would rely upon themselves, and not seek it by a simple exercise of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, [Romans 9:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.30-32). So it will be with us also, if our reliance be not altogether on the providence and grace of God; for what God said to his people respecting the Egyptians, he says to us, "The creature shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this: Their strength is to sit still, [Isaiah 30:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.7)."

***~~2. That confidence in him shall never be disappointed.~~***

When it is said in our text, "The poor of his people shall trust in it." the meaning evidently is, that by so doing they shall be secure. And certain it is, that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower; and that the righteous runs to it and is safe." Find in the whole annals of the world one person who, when trusting in God, was disappointed of his hope.

Did *Manasseh*rely on the mercy of God? He, even he, obtained pardon.

Did *Asa*, or *Jehoshaphat*, or *Hezekiah*, rely on the power of God? No enemy could withstand them.

Did *Abraham*believe in the truth and faithfulness of God? The long-expected seed was given to him, that became "as the stars of Heaven for number, and as the sands upon the sea-shore innumerable."

Thus shall every one be blessed who puts his trust in God, "he shall be firm, and immoveable as Mount Zion itself, which cannot be removed, but abides forever, [Psalm 125:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.1)." The question, "Who ever put his trust in God and was confounded?" never has been, and never can be answered, but in a way of universal negation.

The text should be yet further viewed as,

***~~III. A consoling truth.~~***

It is unspeakably consoling,

***~~1. In reference to the Church at large.~~***

Many are the enemies of the Church at this day, as well as in former times. But when the Church was in its infancy, both of Jews and Gentiles combined against it—it stood as a rock that defies all the efforts of the tempestuous ocean. The waves that threat its existence are dashed in pieces at its feet. So shall it still be to the end of time; whatever confederacies are formed against the Church shall come to nothing; for "it is founded on a rock; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

***~~2. In reference to the poorest and weakest of Christians.~~***

The chief of its members are characterized as "a poor and afflicted people, who trust in the name of the Lord, [Zephaniah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.12); and their conscious weakness often proves to them a source of great discouragement. But how consoling is the truth, that they are pre-eminently destined to receive the benefits of Christ's heavenly intercession, [Isaiah 61:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-3), and to be the objects of his peculiar care! [Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11). It is under the very character of people poor and weak and destitute, that they are designated as triumphing over all their enemies; ("the foot shall tread them down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy, [Isaiah 26:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.6)") Their weakness is described as carried to the utmost extent than can be imagined, even as resembling that of people wounded, and captive, and dead; and yet in that very state is success insured to them; for "though lame, they shall take the prey, [Isaiah 33:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.23)." "though captives, they shall take those captive whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors, [Isaiah 14:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.2);" and though slain, they shall rise mid overcome, and "their enemies shall fall under the slain, [Isaiah 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.4)."

Hence the weakest among them all, "knowing in whom he has believed," may adopt the triumphant language of the prophet, "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up! [Isaiah 50:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.7-9)."

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

Look then, brethren, to the Scriptures, to see what God has done in former ages. See what instruction is to be gathered from those records, for your own conduct. And know, that God is as ready to "perfect his own strength in your weakness," as he has been in any instance from the foundation of the world. Only realize the thought of *his universal agency in the government of the world, and of his watchful care over the interests of his special people*; and then "you need not fear, though the earth be moved, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, [Psalm 46:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.2)."

See David's composure amidst such troubles as drove his friends to despair, "In the LORD I take refuge. How then can you say to me: "Flee like a bird to your mountain. For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them!

Such composure may you also, even the least and weakest of you, enjoy, if you confide in God; for "there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord! [Proverbs 21:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 21.30);" but "his counsel shall stand; and he will do all his will! [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.10)."

***~~#885~~***

***~~CHRIST A GREAT SAVIOR~~***

***~~[Isaiah 19:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 19.20)~~***

"They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a great One, and he shall deliver them."

God usually grants his mercies when we are reduced to the greatest straits. This is manifest in his most remarkable dispensations of providence and of grace. In the greatest extremity God promised to send a deliverer to Egypt.

In this view it seems applicable to the angel who slew 185,000 of Sennacherib's army; for, though that deliverance was more immediately given to the Jews under Hezekiah—yet in its consequences it extended to Egypt. Sennacherib had before conquered and ravaged Egypt; and it was most probable that if he had taken Jerusalem be would have again proceeded there with his victorious army, and reduced that already desolated kingdom to the lowest ebb of misery. And perhaps there may be a further reference to some other deliverers.

But there is a further reference to Christ as the Savior of the Gentile world. This appears from the whole context, verse 18-25; and it is in seasons of heavy dejection that He reveals himself to them; to him therefore we must look as the Savior foretold in the text.

***~~I. In what respects He is "a great Savior".~~***

It is justly said by the Psalmist that "his greatness is unsearchable! [Psalm 145:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.3); nevertheless we may, not unprofitably, endeavor to illustrate it.

***~~He is great when considered in his own person.~~***

He has a name above every name either on earth or in Heaven. He is exalted to be a Prince that can give repentance and remission of sins, [Acts 5:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.31). The voice of inspiration calls him, "the great God and our Savior, [Titus 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.13)." He speaks of himself in terms of similar import, [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22); nor can anything be more glorious than the description given of him by the prophet, [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6). This Savior, "though a man, thinks it not robbery to be equal with God, [Philippians 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.6)." He is "God manifest in the flesh, [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16)," even "God over all blessed forever! [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5)."

***~~He is also great in respect of the salvation he has wrought out for us.~~***

***~~Who can count the number of the sins from which he has delivered us?~~***

***~~Who can estimate the misery from which he has redeemed us?~~***

Through our whole lives we have been heaping up treasures of wrath, [Romans 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.5). Yet is there no condemnation to us if we are savingly interested in him, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1); besides, he has purchased for us an eternal inheritance in Heaven. Who can estimate all that is there enjoyed? We must know all the glories of Heaven and the horrors of Hell, before we can fully appreciate the greatness of his salvation.

But before we speak peace to ourselves, it befits us to inquire,

***~~II. For whose deliverance he is sent.~~***

Great as his mercy is, it will not indiscriminately extend to all. They, for whose relief he comes, are "oppressed" with the burden of sin.

The generality, alas! are well contented with their bondage. If he should offer to deliver them, they would thrust him from them, as the Israelites of old did their savior Moses, [Acts 7:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.37); [Acts 7:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.39). But there are some who mourn like the saints of old, [Isaiah 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.5). [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24). They desire nothing so much as to be delivered from their corruptions. For these Jesus came down from Heaven, and died upon the cross. Nor, though they be lawful captives, will he leave them in the hand of their enemies. [Isaiah 48:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.24), [25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah 48.25).

They at the same time "cry earnestly to the Lord" for deliverance.

There are some, it must be confessed, who are uneasy in their sins—yet do not with fervor and constancy implore his mercy, [Psalm 32:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.3-4). [Hosea 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.14). Such therefore, notwithstanding their uneasiness, obtain no help from him. His mercy is promised to those alone who seek it with importunity, [Matthew 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.7). [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.37). But humble and believing suppliants shall never be rejected by him. They shall find him a great, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

**Are any among you unconcerned about their sins?** O! reflect on your state. Would God have sent you such a Savior, if your condition had not required it? Or, will you take occasion from this stupendous grace, to live more securely in your sins? O! consider that your cries, however available now, will soon, if delayed, become of no effect! [Luke 16:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.24-25).

**Are others of you conflicting with sin and Satan?**Lift up your heads with joy. However desperate your state may seem, your redemption draws near, nor shall all the powers of darkness rescue you from your Redeemer's hands! [John 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28).

**Are there here any who have experienced deliverance?** Adore your Lord, and go on, "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Only commit yourselves entirely to him, and you shall join in eternal Hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb!

***~~#886~~***

***~~THE CONVERSION OF JEWS AND GENTILES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 19:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 19.24-25)~~***

KJV. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord Almighty shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."

NIV. "In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

There is among God's ancient people an idea that, so far from their nation being converted to Christianity, the whole world is, in due season, to be converted to Judaism. Nor do we wonder much that this error should prevail among them; since, in the prophetic writings, the change which is to be wrought upon the Gentiles is very generally described in terms taken from the Jewish Law. This is peculiarly observable in the passage before us, where Assyria and Egypt, the representatives of God's enemies in all ages, are spoken of as "raising an altar to the Lord," and "offering sacrifices thereon;" and "making vows unto the Lord," and "swearing by his name;" and as "raising up to him a pillar," such as the Israelites formed after their passage through Jordan, "to be a sign and a witness to the Lord" that they were his redeemed people, and that he alone was their God See these different expressions, verse 18-21.

But a more thorough knowledge of their prophecies would convince them, that they are to enjoy a far different dispensation from that of Moses—a dispensation, not of works, but of grace; a dispensation, suited not to one small nation only, but to Egyptians and Assyrians, and to every people under Heaven. In fact, though legal terms are here used to express the piety which shall characterize the latter day, it is of that day that my text speaks, when "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ;" and it is in this view that God expresses such satisfaction in it.

Let us consider,

***~~I. The event in which God expresses such delight.~~***

***~~It is the conversion of the Gentiles to God.~~***

Egypt and Assyria, and the whole Gentile world, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be erected as a standard in the midst of them, shall flock to it from every quarter; and, together with the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, form one universal Church, "one fold under one Shepherd. Compare verse 23, 24 with 11:10-12, 15, 16." "With Assyria and Egypt shall Israel be a third, even a blessing in the midst of the land." Hitherto, "the Israelites have only been a curse in the different countries over which they have been dispersed [Zechariah 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.13);" for while they have been universally execrated, they have been a snare to their enemies, and an occasion of greatly aggravating their guilt. But "in that day they will prove a blessing" to all among whom they dwell; they will prove a blessing, as examples "whose conversion will be as life from the dead to the whole world, [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15);" they will prove a blessing, too, as instruments, who, being themselves converted, "will declare God's glory among the Gentiles," and, like the priests of old, present thousands and millions of them as free-will offerings upon God's altar, [Isaiah 66:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.19-21).

We all know of what use the showers are which descend upon the face of the earth, wherever God is pleased to send them; and precisely that office are the Jews, now dispersed over the earth, in due season destined to perform, [Micah 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 5.7). The whole process is well described by the Prophet Zechariah, who says, that "many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem, every one of them taking hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you! [Zechariah 8:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.20-23)."

**In this event God will greatly rejoice.**

To this effect he has said, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; and I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, [Isaiah 65:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.18-19)." The expressions in my text are peculiarly striking to this effect, "The Lord Almighty shall bless all his converts, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance." All will be regarded by him with peculiar affection, while yet his people Israel shall possess their original and distinctive honor, as "his special people," the lot of his inheritance, [Deuteronomy 32:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.9)." But when God *pronounces*these "blessed," he *makes*them so; he makes them blessed by the richest communications of his grace, his mercy, and his peace; and in due season he will consummate their blessedness in the fullest possible enjoyment of his presence and glory.

Such is the blessedness prepared for all who believe in Christ, whatever may have been their former state. We may have been as hostile to Christ as the superstitious Jews, or as far from him as the idolatrous Gentiles—and yet, if we embrace and obey the Gospel, this blessedness shall be ours.

And is this event now fast approaching? Let us then consider,

***~~II. The effect which the prospect of it should produce on us.~~***

Surely we should not be insensible to it.

***~~1. This prospect should prevail to enlarge our philanthropy.~~***

We are, for the most part, very narrow and contracted in our regards for our fellow men. Rarely do we feel much for any, except our own immediate neighbors, or those in whose welfare we have some personal interest. And even then, it is for their temporal, rather than their spiritual welfare that we are chiefly concerned. But we ought to extend our regards to the whole family of man dispersed throughout the earth; and, above all, to feel for their eternal interests.

Behold how Jehovah expresses himself in our text. One would have thought that the great oppressors of his people, Egypt and Assyria, might have been excepted from his benevolent regards; but we find he contemplates their return to him with the utmost delight. Thus, then, should it be with you. You should be like-minded with God in this holy feeling. The whole world, whether Jews or Gentiles, should be objects of your deepest solicitude. To see them ignorant of God and his Christ, should fill you with pain; and to have a prospect of their conversion, should excite in you the liveliest joy. Let me not be mistaken; I would not have your neighbors overlooked, either in relation to their temporal or their eternal interests; but I would have your hearts expanded, even us God's is, to embrace the whole family of man; and, as the conversion of their souls to God is, beyond all comparison, the most important object, I would have that to occupy the chief place in your minds.

***~~2. This prospect should prevail to raise our expectations.~~***

We think it almost impossible to enlighten the minds of the idolatrous Gentiles; and we quite ridicule the idea of converting the bigoted and superstitious Jews. But the work shall be done; for the prophet says, "If this is marvelous in your eyes, should it also be marvelous in my eyes? says the Lord Almighty, [Zechariah 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.6)."

Beloved brethren, not only is this event *certain*, but it is also *near*. Between two and three thousand years ago, the Prophet Isaiah had such clear views of it, that he saw it through this long vista, exhibited as it were before his eyes, "Lift up your eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does .…You shall say in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? [Isaiah 49:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.18); [Isaiah 49:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.21)." "Who are these that fly as doves to their windows, [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)."

Now, did the prophet in his day see it realized before his eyes, and shall not we, now that the time is so nearly come? Dear brethren, you may already see "a stir among the dry bones, through the whole valley of vision; and it is yet but a very little time, and the Spirit of God shall breathe upon them, and they shall live, a whole army, [Ezekiel 37:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.7-10)." Yes, I can confidently say, "It is now but a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest! [Isaiah 29:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.17)."

***~~3. This prospect should prevail to quicken our exertions.~~***

In every age has God carried on his work through the instrumentality of men. What were the Prophets or the Apostles, but ministers, by whom he accomplished the purposes of his grace? And so, at this time, he appeals to us respecting the ignorant and ungodly world, "How shall they hear without a preacher? [Romans 10:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.14)."

You will say, perhaps, "We cannot all be preachers." True; but there is much which may be done by every one among us. We may all comply with that direction of the prophet, "Lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left." Yes, we may all "pray for the peace and welfare of Jerusalem." In fact, we are commanded, not only to pray, but to give God no rest, until he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth, [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6-7)." We may also contribute, each according to his ability, to further those means which are employed, of circulating through the world the Scriptures of truth, and of sending Missionaries also to instruct mankind.

The command given by our Lord was, "to go forth into all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature." But how can people go at their own cost? If a warfare against a hostile nation is determined, we never think of men going to maintain it at their own cost. Nor is it to be supposed that now people should wage war against all the powers of darkness, and go forth to rescue the millions whom they hold in bondage, if they are not aided in their efforts by the contributions of their brethren. In this way, then, all may exert themselves in the common cause; and if our blessed Lord gave up himself to the most cruel death for the salvation of the world, methinks we, who have been partakers of his mercy, should use our efforts in every possible way, to extend the knowledge of Him through the world; and never to rest, until "all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest," and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God!"

***~~#887~~***

***~~PROFANE SCOFFERS INSTRUCTED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 21:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 21.11-12)~~***

KJV "The burden of Dumah. He calls to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire you; return, come."

NIV "An oracle concerning Dumah: Someone calls to me from Seir, "Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?" The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again."

This portion of holy writ is justly considered as very obscure; and the more so, because we are not aware of any records of history that will reflect light upon it. The learned Vitringa conceives the scope of the prophecy to be this: that, on occasion of some heavy calamity inflicted either on the Assyrians or Chaldeans in common with the Jews, an inhabitant of Edom inquired of the prophet what the duration of the trouble should be; and then he supposes the prophet to answer, that, as far as respected the Jews, a morning of relief was at hand; but that to Edom there was coming a night of long and heavy affliction. But on such an interpretation, the severe answer of the prophet seems uncalled for.

I would rather confine the whole subject to Idumea; and then the question of the Edomite, and the answer of the prophet, will be natural, and perfectly consistent. It is well known that the Prophet Isaiah foretold the fate of Edom, as well as of all the other nations around Judea; and that he predicted the heaviest calamities to them all.

Now, I suppose an Edomite unbelievingly and contemptuously to ask, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" That is, 'You, as placed on a watch-tower, presume to declare what shall befall our nation; tell me how long is it before these calamities which you predict, shall come upon us?' To this question the prophet answers, 'You will have yet a "morning" of prosperity; but, I can assure you, it shall be succeeded by a long "night" of heavy adversity. If you really desire to be informed, in order to avert, by penitence, the threatened calamity, follow up your inquiries in a befitting spirit, "return" to God, whom you have forsaken; and "come" to Him, from whom you have deeply revolted. Then there may yet be hope both concerning you and your nation.'

In this view of the prophecy, we see:

***~~I. In what way men treat the Divine testimony.~~***

The spirit shown by the inquiring Edomite is precisely that which has prevailed in every age, and which the Apostle Peter teaches us to expect as still more prevalent in the latter days, "There shall come, in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2 Peter 3:3-4." This, I apprehend, was the way in which the predictions of Noah relative to the deluge were treated by the scoffers in the antediluvian world; and people of a similar spirit abounded in Isaiah's days; whom he describes as teeming with atheistical defiance, and saying, "Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it, [Isaiah 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.19)."

To such an extent did this impiety prevail in the time of Ezekiel, that God speaks of it as actually passed into a proverb, "Son of man, what is that proverb that you have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision fails?" And it is worthy of particular observation, that the answer which Ezekiel was commanded to give to the scoffers of Israel, is precisely to the same effect with that which Isaiah had given to the Idumean inquirer, "Tell them, thus says the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease; and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision, [Ezekiel 12:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 12.22-23)."

Thus it is that men treat the Divine testimony at this day:

***~~1. They speak of God's judgments with unbelieving indifference.~~***

As God's ambassadors to a guilty world, we are constrained to denounce his judgments against impenitent transgressors; but how is our testimony received by them? Have we not reason to take up the lamentation which was first uttered by the Prophet Isaiah, and was afterward repeated both by the Lord Jesus Christ and his servant Paul, "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? [Isaiah 53:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.1). [John 12:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.37-38). [Romans 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.16)."

It is in vain that we bring forth either the declarations of Jehovah, or positive instances of their accomplishment. The prevailing idea among unbelievers, is that however wickedly they may live, they have nothing to fear. They *imagine that God is too merciful to inflict punishment on them, and especially the punishment of everlasting torments*, which no actions of theirs can be reasonably supposed to merit. Full of this erroneous conceit, they become settled on their lees, and say, in their hearts at least, if not also with their lips, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil, [Zephaniah 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 1.12)."

***~~2. They speak of God's judgments with contemptuous levity.~~***

This, I apprehend, was the real feeling expressed in those interrogations, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" In the same manner was the Apostle Paul regarded as a "babbler," unworthy of anything but derision. His discourse, which almost converted King Agrippa to the faith, brought to Festus no other conviction than this, "Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning is making you mad! [Acts 26:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.24)." And even the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who "spoke as never any man spoke," was considered as unfit for any person of respectability to hear, "He has a devil, and is mad; why do you listen to him? [John 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.20)."

Is it to be wondered at, then, if those who faithfully preach the Gospel be still at this day branded with opprobrious names, and their message be considered only as "a cunningly devised fable?" It must be so, as long as there shall be a carnal man on earth; for "the things of the Spirit are foolishness to him;" and those who live only to proclaim and propagate those things, can appear to him in no other light than fools. If, like Ezekiel, we have boldness to deliver God's messages to men, we shall be sure to have applied to our ministrations the same contemptuous observation as was made on his, "Ah! Lord God, does he not speak parables? [Ezekiel 20:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.49)."

The prophet's answer to his scoffing inquirers shows us,

***~~II. In what way they themselves should be treated.~~***

It is good, in many cases, to "answer a fool according to his folly." But there are cases (and particularly where the eternal interests of men are at stake,) in which we should "not answer a fool according to his folly, [Proverbs 26:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 26.4-5)," but should give him such counsel and admonition as his necessities require. Mark the conduct of the prophet on this occasion:

***~~1. The prophet's admonition.~~***

He tells the inquirer, that, though his countrymen should yet have a season of prosperity, a night of fearful adversity awaited them. And this is the answer which I must make to the profane scoffer, or the careless unbeliever: 'You may go on prosperously for a season; you may have riches in the world; you may account yourselves happy, and be so accounted by all your carnal friends; but, though your day may be bright and long, as in the height of summer—a night, a long and fearful night, will come at last! O! how terrible will be that night, which shall never be irradiated with so much as a single gleam of hope! Yet such is the state that awaits you; for you "is reserved the blackness of darkness forever! [Jude 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jude 1.13)."

It may seem at present to be at a great distance; but every day and hour brings it nearer to you; and at the appointed hour it will commence. Yes, Peter tells us, that "for a long time your judgment lingers not, and your damnation slumbers not! [2 Peter 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.3)." While men "refuse to turn, God whets his sword, and bends his bow, and ordains his arrows against them!" for their destruction, [Psalm 7:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 7.12-13). And the very interval that is allowed to them is only given that they may "fill up the measure of their iniquities," and have "his wrath come upon them to the uttermost."

Their present prosperity is only like the rich pasture to flocks and herds, whereby "they are nourished for the day of slaughter, [James 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.3)." Happy, happy is the brute creation, which, if taken in an unexpected hour, survives not the stroke that takes them hence!

But let us reflect a moment on that hour when a profane scoffer, or a careless unbeliever, shall open his eyes in the eternal world! He has buoyed himself up with the hope that he should see the face of God in peace—but how will he shrink back at the sight of an angry God! What a shriek will he utter, that shall be heard through the vast expanse of Hell; when, instead of a listless and unobservant Deity, as he had pictured to himself, he shall see a holy God filled with wrath and fiery indignation, and prepared to execute all the judgments which he had denounced against him!

I must, I must warn you, my beloved brethren, that these are indeed the true sayings of God; and, whether believed or not, they shall be verified before long; for "God will be true; and every man," that contradicts him, "will be found a liar."

**2. The prophet's counsel.**

Not even the scoffer should be dismissed without such counsel, as, if duly received, may operate a saving change upon his soul. The prophet here says to the inquiring Edomites, "If you will inquire seriously, inquire; returning" from your evil ways, and "coming" humbly and believingly to your God. So I say to you: If there be among you any who really desire to know the purposes of Heaven, come; and, as God's watchman, I will, to the best of my power, instruct you. And this in particular will I declare to you, that if only you will return to God, your past iniquities shall not be your ruin."

Hear what God himself said to the Prophet Jeremiah, "Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel; and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you .…Turn unto me; for I am married unto you .…Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And the very instant that they replied, "Behold, we come unto you; for you are the Lord our God;" the prophet was commanded to say, "If you will return, O Israel, says the Lord, return unto me, [Jeremiah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.12); [Jeremiah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.14); [Jeremiah 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.22); [Jeremiah 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 4.1)."

This fully explains the words, "Return, come."

In all the Scriptures there is not a single word that tends to the discouragement of a returning sinner. No, the whole sacred volume says, Come, come, come, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him who hears say, Come; and whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely!" And lest we should suppose that any sin whatever shall prove a bar to the acceptance of a returning penitent, our blessed Savior expressly says, "Him who comes unto me, I will never cast out!" This counsel, then, I would affectionately give to you, "Inquire; Return; Come."

***~~But that this counsel may be better understood, I will now, in conclusion, address you more at length.~~***

***~~1. Be serious in your inquiries into the truth of God.~~***

Inquire after nothing in a light, contemptuous manner, "Be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Nor make any inquiry with indifference; like Pilate, when he asked of our Lord, "What is truth?" and never waited to receive an answer. But set yourselves diligently to "search the Scriptures;" for in them alone will you find the whole truth, without any mixture of error.

Inquire, too, into the state of your souls before God. Bring them to the true and proper touchstone, the Word of God; examine yourselves by it; and beg of God to search and try you; that, if there be any hidden evil in your heart, it may be disclosed to you, and be purged away by the blood and Spirit of Christ.

***~~2. Be assured that God's Word shall take effect.~~***

Presume not to sit in judgment on it, or condemn it. You are not called to judge, but to submit. If you see not the reason of God's declarations, do not therefore conclude that they are not founded in wisdom or goodness or truth; but say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter." If the Word of God holds forth a threatening, then tremble at it, and beg of God that it may never be executed upon you. If, on the contrary, it sets forth a promise, then lay hold of it, and rest upon it, and expect the accomplishment of it to your soul. And be fully satisfied in your minds, that the final states of the whole world shall be in exact agreement with it, and *eternal happiness or misery be awarded to all according to its unerring dictates*.

***~~3. Let the final outcome of things be the great object of your concern.~~***

It matters little whether your present portion resemble morning or night. If you enjoy all the prosperity that the world can afford, of what value will it be when night comes? On the other hand, if you experience here one continued night of affliction, it will soon pass away, and no more be remembered, when once the bright morn of everlasting day shall have arisen upon you! Learn then to despise the pleasure of sense, and to endure with fortitude the troubles of life. Do not fear to make sacrifices, or to sustain any afflictions, in the cause of Christ, "in whose favor is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life itself." *Set eternity before you, and keep it ever in your view*; and then, though your night be long, the day shall soon arise upon you, when "your sun shall no more go down;" but "the Lord shall be an everlasting light unto you, and your God your glory!"

***~~#888~~***

***~~THE UNCONCERN OF MEN AMIDST GOD'S CALLS TO REPENTANCE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 22:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 22.12-14)~~***

KJV. "In that day did the Lord God Almighty call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die. And it was revealed in my ears by the Lord Almighty, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, until you die, says the Lord God Almighty."

NIV. "The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!" The LORD Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: "Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for," says the Lord, the LORD Almighty!"

True religion is equally abhorrent from an atheistic contempt of God's providence, and a presumptuous reliance on it. It teaches us neither to "trust in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we [Jeremiah 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.4)." Nor, on the other hand, to trust in human devices, to the neglect of him, who "works all things after the counsel of his own will."

It was for the latter of these sins, that the Jews were reproved in the words before us. The Assyrians had invaded their country, and were coming against Jerusalem itself; and the Jews, instead of crying to God for help, contented themselves with fortifying their city; and lived as securely as if no danger were at hand. This greatly incensed God, and caused him to denounce against them his heaviest judgments.

The words before us will lead us to consider,

***~~I. The duty to which God calls us.~~***

***~~The terms used in the text were intended to express repentance.~~***

The shaving of the head, and cutting of the beard, and putting on of sackcloth—were used among the Jews as indications of sorrow, [Ezekiel 27:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 27.30-31). Of themselves indeed, neither those nor any other actions, however significant, had any value before God; they were even hateful to him, if used without correspondent dispositions of heart, [Isaiah 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.13-14); [Isaiah 66:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.3). But, *when accompanied with inward contrition, they were pleasing and acceptable in his sight!* [1 Kings 21:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 21.27-29).

***~~This is the duty to which God calls us at this time.~~***

He spoke to the Jewish nation by the dispensations of his providence, [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9). Awful visitations were always considered in that view, [Judges 20:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 20.25-26), and the voice of his prophets, Joel, Isaiah, etc. And is he not calling us to repentance at this time, by the calamities of the nation, by the command of our rulers, and by the voice of all his faithful ministers. Yes; he says aloud, "Turn to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning! [Joel 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.12)."

But how little attention we pay to God will appear, if we consider,

***~~II. The state in which we continue.~~***

The evils of which the prophet complained are, alas! too descriptive of our state:

***~~1. We confide in our own preparations without looking to God.~~***

So often has God prospered our naval exertions, that we almost universally overlook his providence, and ascribe our success to our own superior skill and valor. Our hopes also of future conquests are founded wholly on our own prowess. We are active enough in making preparations; but are as unmindful of God, as if we needed not his aid, nor were at all dependent on his will. For the truth of this assertion we appeal to the public papers, and to the expressions of all with whom we converse, verse 7-11.

***~~2. We still live in our usual habits of conviviality and dissipation.~~***

It is not intemperance and excess that is the object of the prophet's reprehension, but an unsuitable gaiety of mind at a time when it befit them to be humbling themselves in dust and ashes. And is not this the case with us among all ranks and orders of the community? Doubtless the pressure of the public burdens must impose restraints on many; but still the change in them is not the effect of a voluntary humiliation, but the reluctant fruit of irresistible necessity.

***~~3. We, in too many instances, turn the very warnings of Jehovah into contempt and ridicule.~~***

The Jews were warned of the near approach of their destruction; and they, to ridicule the idea, said, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die!" We indeed, having no information from God respecting the outcome of public affairs, cannot imitate, with respect to them, the impiety of the Jews.

But, in relation to infinitely more important matters, there is as much profane scoffing among us, as among them. The declarations of God's Word are set at nothing; and they, who most faithfully denounce God's judgments against sin and sinners, are, for the most part, regarded either as hypocrites or fanatics.

Let us then, as it befits us, proceed with all fidelity to show,

***~~III. The evil and danger of such a state.~~***

***~~What can be more unsuitable to our condition?~~***

What would we think of a child or servant that should manifest such a spirit under our rebukes? Does such conduct then befit us towards God, when he is contending with us and chastising us for our sins? Yes, are we not as devoid of humanity as of piety, while we feel no sympathy with the thousands of our suffering fellow-creatures? Well says the prophet on a similar occasion, "Should we then make mirth, [Ezekiel 21:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 21.9-10); [Ezekiel 21:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 21.12)." Surely it befits us rather to "cry and howl" for the miseries that are come upon us, or at least impending over us.

***~~What can be more offensive to God?~~***

The word "surely" is equivalent to an oath, [Hebrews 6:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.13-14); and is it a light thing which causes Jehovah to swear by his own life and immortal perfections? Is it a small matter that causes "the Lord God Almighty to shut up his tender mercies, and to swear that the guilt of such or such an action shall "never be purged away?" Must not that be beyond measure offensive to him, that can fill his bosom with such "fiery indignation"? The sins that have brought down his chastisements are surely great; but an obstinacy under those chastisements which are intended to reform us, is but too probably a forerunner of our utter destruction, [Jeremiah 7:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.12-16). Such also is the import of that threatening, [Amos 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 4.12), the ground of which five times repeated from verse 6 to 11.

***~~What can be more destructive in its consequences?~~***

*The nation cannot be delivered but by means of a national repentance; nor can any individual escape the eternal wrath of God, but by means of his own personal repentance*, [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.3). If there is only one impenitent transgressor in the whole kingdom, "God will search him out with candles," in order to punish him! [Zephaniah 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 1.12)." Even in his present dispensations God will put a difference between those who mourn for sin, and those who are at ease in Zion, [Amos 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 6.1); [Amos 6:3-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 6.3-7). [Ezekiel 9:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 9.4-5). But much more in his decisions at the day of judgment! [Isaiah 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.11-12); [Isaiah 65:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.12-14). Whether therefore we consider our national or our personal danger—it befits us instantly to put away our unbelief and impenitence, and to turn to God with the deepest contrition.

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

It may be thought that the injunctions given to the Jews, had respect to them rather than to ourselves. Let an apostle then be heard in confirmation of the prophet; and let us depart with a determination through grace to obey his voice, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God; and he shall lift you up! [James 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.9-10)." The very Gospel itself, with all that Christ has done and suffered for us, will do us no good if we remain impenitent. The command is, "Repent, and believe the gospel." We must "sow in tears, if ever we would reap in joy!"

***~~#889~~***

***~~ELIAKIM A TYPE OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 22:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 22.24)~~***

"They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house."

***~~In the various changes that take place in human governments, or in the people who are to be entrusted with the supreme authority—the hand of God ought to be continually acknowledged! Whoever are the instruments, or whatever are the means, of effecting those changes—we must look through the second causes, to God as the first great Cause, who orders all things after the counsel of his own will, and makes use of men as his agents—to convey blessings to a nation, or to inflict his just judgments upon it.~~***

But, in his dispensations towards the Jews, there was often some mystery concealed, where we would have observed nothing but an ordinary occurrence. This was the case with respect to the deposition of Shebna, and the substitution of Eliakim in his place, as first minister of state under Hezekiah. Eliakim seems to have been raised as a type of Christ; the agreement between him and Christ is strongly marked in the passage before us,

***~~I. In the authority committed to him.~~***

***~~The appointment of both Shebna and Eliakim was of God.~~***

To put the audience in full possession of the context, read distinctly from verse 15 to the end; and observe that verse 25 refers, not to Eliakim, but to Shebna. Shebna was a proud, vain-glorious man, far more intent on aggrandizing himself and his family, than on executing the arduous duties of his station. God therefore moved Hezekiah to dismiss him, and inspired Isaiah, not only to predict his degradation, but to foretell the elevation of Eliakim to his post and office.

Thus our Lord appointed to succeed the governors of the Jewish nation, who, both in the civil and ecclesiastical departments, had abused their trust, and rendered themselves unworthy to be continued in it. Humiliating in the extreme are the descriptions which the prophet gives of the rulers both in church and state, [Isaiah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.5); [Isaiah 56:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.10-12); and the time was coming, when God would fulfill his Word, in "raising up in their place a faithful priest, who should do all his will, and another king who should reign over the house of David forever, [1 Samuel 2:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.30); [1 Samuel 2:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.35) and [Jeremiah 23:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.2); [Jeremiah 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.5)." "With their robe was He to be clothed, and with their belt was he to be strengthened; and their government was to be committed into his hands. Compare verse 21 with [Revelation 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.13). [Isaiah 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.5); [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6);" and this too, not only according to the commandment of God, but by the immediate agency of his overruling Providence. As this was marked in the case of Eliakim, (verse 19-21,) so in that of Christ by the raising him from the dead, and utterly destroying the Jewish polity.

***~~The authority with which both Christ and Eliakim were invested, was supreme.~~***

To mark his office, Eliakim was to have "the key of the house of David laid upon his shoulder, and then to exercise the the most unlimited authority;" nor was he ever to be removed, like Shebna; (whoever boasted security would soon fail him;) but he was to be "a nail fastened in a sure place."

Now our blessed Lord applies to himself the very words here used in reference to Eliakim, [Revelation 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.7); thereby showing that Eliakim was indeed a type of him; and that what was spoken of Eliakim only in a figure, was really, and in the strictest sense, applicable to himself; the power of both being uncontrollable and unalterable. "All power in Heaven and in earth is committed unto Christ, [Matthew 28:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.18);" in everything that relates to the kingdom of nature or of grace, "he opens and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens."

None are exalted, or disgraced, either in this world, or the world to come, but agreeably to the orders which he issues; nor can any, even in the smallest degree, resist his will, "He does according to his will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand, or say to him, What are you doing?"

Nor will the lapse of ages effect any change on him, "He is the same yesterday, today, and forever [Hebrews 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.8)." "He is a nail fastened in a sure place." Seated on his holy hill of Zion, He laughs at the impotent combinations of men and devils, and has all his enemies in derision! [Psalm 2:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.1-4). "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed! [Daniel 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 7.14)."

***~~II. In the benefits resulting from Christ's administration.~~***

A wise and righteous governor is a rich blessing, as well to the prince who appoints him, as to the people whom he governs. Such was Eliakim; who was most probably of the royal seed; since it would not otherwise have been any virtue in him to seek with so much diligence the exaltation of his father's house.

But in what an infinitely higher degree do the benefits of Christ's administration appear!

Was Eliakim "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah?" What a blessing is Christ also to the world at large! As, in a state, all are benefited by a wise administration, though many are insensible to the blessings they enjoy; so the world is much indebted to the revelation which Christ has given us, and to his wise government of the universe, though they deny his providence, and despise his grace.

Was Eliakim "a nail, on which all the vessels of his father's house hung" in safety? What security does Christ afford to his dependants in particular! The various orders and degrees of Christians are elsewhere compared to vessels of various kinds, [2 Timothy 2:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.20-21); and every one of them, from the greatest to the least, hangs upon him! Were He to fall, they would perish; but as long as He stands, they shall be upheld, "because He lives they shall live also, [John 14:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.19).

Was Eliakim "a glorious throne to his father's house?" Jesus also, by his righteous administration, advances the glory of his heavenly Father. In ascribing to Jesus the power and dominion over all, we do not derogate from the Father's honor, but add to it, [Philippians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.11). His mediatorial office he holds from the Father, and improves it, in every instance, for his glory. Whether he opens or shuts, whether he kills or saves alive—every perfection of God receives brighter luster from the dispensation; and gives reason for unbounded thankfulness to God, for having "committed all judgment to his Son," and "laid our help upon One so Mighty! [Psalm 89:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.19)."

***~~We cannot improve this subject better, than by learning from it,~~***

***~~1. To renounce all creature-dependence.~~***

Great as the power of Shebna was, both he, and all his dependants, were brought down in God's appointed time; and the vanities in which he had gloried, became monuments of his shame, and means of perpetuating his disgrace! verse 18. Thus will it be with all who trust in an arm of flesh. God has denounced a curse against them, [Jeremiah 17:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5); and though, through the forbearance of God, it may be awhile delayed, it will surely come at last; and all, wherein we trusted, will turn to our confusion; our wisdom will become folly; our strength, weakness; our righteousness, as filthy rags! 1 Corinthians 1:19. [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6).

We may dream of being "as a nail fastened in a sure place;" but if we rely on anything of our own, our hopes will be disappointed, and our expectations will perish. Let us not then:  
lean to our own understanding,  
or depend on our own strength,  
or trust in our own righteousness.

We must be empty in ourselves, if we would be filled by God; for it is "the hungry alone whom he fills with good things; the full and the rich he will send empty away;" "He will resist the proud; and give grace only to the humble, [Luke 1:52-53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.52-53). [James 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.6)."

***~~2. To trust in the Lord with our whole hearts.~~***

Jesus is indeed "a nail fastened in a sure place;" and able to bear the weight of the whole universe. He is exalted by the hand of God himself on purpose that He may "be a Prince and a Savior" unto us. And, if we rely on him, he is "able to save us to the uttermost!" Only let our trust in him be entire, (exactly like that of a vessel on a nail,) and we may rest assured, that all who so hang on him, shall be "the glory of his Father's house."

As there is no other support for sinful man, so neither is there any fear of disappointment to those who trust in him. Let none then imagine themselves so great as not to need his support; or deem themselves so insignificant, that they shall not obtain it; or think themselves in such perilous circumstances, that He cannot uphold them. "Every vessel, from the largest flagon to the smallest cup," must owe its preservation to him alone; and by him shall all be saved, if they do but "cleave to him with full purpose of heart!"

***~~#890~~***

***~~THE REIGN OF CHRIST GLORIOUS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23)~~***

KJV. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord Almighty shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients, gloriously."

NIV. "The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously!"

The chapter before us seems to refer to the destruction of the Jewish Church and polity by the Chaldeans. But it looks forward, also, to their restoration, and to the establishment of the Messiah's empire consequent upon it. Of that period it is delightful to speak; for, in fact, the glory of it far exceeds all that language can express, or the most enlarged imagination can conceive.

To give you some idea of the Messiah's coming, as it is here described, I will endeavor to set before you,

***~~I. The nature of the Messiah's kingdom.~~***

It differs widely from all other kingdoms.

Other kings have dominion over the people and the property of their subjects; but his empire is over their souls.

The laws of other kingdoms are almost entirely restrictive; his laws, however restrictively expressed, are not prohibitory only, but preceptive; and intended to call forth into exercise every power of the soul. The substance of them all is contained here, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength; and your neighbor as yourself." Nor does anyone fully approve himself to him as a faithful subject, unless "every thought of his heart be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ! [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)."

***~~II. The extent of his dominion.~~***

Never was there a kingdom like unto His.

At present, indeed, His is very limited; but, at the period mentioned in my text, it will be absolutely universal, "All kings shall bow down before him, all nations shall serve him, [Psalm 72:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.11)," and "the utmost ends of the earth shall be his possession, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)." "There will then be but one Lord over the face of the whole world, and his name one, [Zechariah 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.9)." Nor will there be any who yield him only a forced or partial obedience; for in that day "all will be righteous, [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21), "nor will there be any more Canaanites in the land of the Lord Almighty, [Zechariah 14:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.21)."

***~~III. The happiness of his subjects.~~***

If the happiness of a people be estimated by their honors, their wealth, their enjoyments—then never was there a kingdom to be compared with His. The most exalted person in any other kingdom is but a child of *man*; whereas the least and lowest of his subjects is a child of the living *God*. "Israel," says Jehovah, "is my son, my first-born, [Exodus 4:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 4.22)."

The wealth of earthly monarchs, however great, may be counted; that which is owned by the poorest of his subjects is "unsearchable! [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8)." "Though he has nothing (of an earthly nature), he actually possesses all things! [2 Corinthians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.10)."

In earthly kingdoms, a few only, and those of the higher ranks, have access to their king; and that only for a short season, on some particular occasions. But in Christ's kingdom, every subject has liberty to "ask whatever he will," with an absolute certainty, that (provided the request will be beneficial to his soul) he shall obtain it, [John 14:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.13-14); [John 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.7).

In other kingdoms, the subjects are only subjects; but in Christ's kingdom every subject is himself a king! [Revelation 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.6), having a *throne*[Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21), a *crown*[2 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.8), a *kingdom*[Luke 22:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.29), for his unalienable and everlasting possession!

The subjects of other kingdoms have their pleasures and their joys; but the subjects of Christ's kingdom are "*full*of joy and peace in believing, [Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13)," yes, "of joy unspeakable and full of glory! [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)." Well might Moses say, "Happy are you, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency, [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)."

***~~IV. The glory of his reign.~~***

Truly, never did there exist among men such a kingdom as this. In this there will not be found one enemy unsubdued; one subject of the realm debased, or destitute, or unholy, or unhappy. Even at present, so far as Christ really reigns in the heart, this is found; but in that day, when his power will be universally operative and effectual, it will be productive of these effects in every place and in every bosom.

But, as the crown and summit of all, every soul will refer to Christ as the life, the peace, the strength, the joy, the glory of his whole Church. There will be stars differing from each other in splendor; but all will acknowledge him as the sun, from whence all their luster is derived, and to whom alone all the glory must be ascribed.

In the reign of Solomon, so great was the prosperity of the Jewish people, that "silver was common as the stones," and "of no account" in the public estimation, [1 Kings 10:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 10.21); [1 Kings 10:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 10.27). But that was poverty itself, in comparison with what shall be the portion of God's people in the millennial age! For then the very poorest among them shall be able to say, "All things are mine; for I am Christ's! [1 Corinthians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22-23)."

That there may be trials then, as well as now, I do not deny; but they will all be made subservient to the advancement of the people's happiness; seeing, that "as their tribulations abound, their consolations also by Christ shall much more abound, [2 Corinthians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.5)."

***~~See then, brethren,~~***

***~~1. What you should desire on earth.~~***

The sun and moon may well be considered as emblems of all that is great and glorious upon earth; but "glorious as they are, they have no glory, by reason of the glory that excels." Before the superior luster of the Redeemer's kingdom they must hide their diminished heads, "ashamed and confounded," as unworthy of regard, in comparison with Christ, and of the felicity that is enjoyed through him. Let this, then, be the one object of your desire, to become subjects of his kingdom. Truly, "to be a door-keeper in his house, is better than to dwell in the most magnificent and richly furnished tents of the ungodly! [Psalm 84:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.10)." Seek to be able to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his! [Song of Solomon 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 2.16);" and you can have no richer bliss on earth!

***~~2. What blessedness awaits you in the eternal world!~~***

There you will "behold the King in his beauty, [Isaiah 33:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.17)," yes, in the full effulgence of his majesty and glory.

There, too, will you yourselves be freed from all your present infirmities; for there "the spirits of the just are made perfect, [Hebrews 12:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.23)."

There your abilities will be enlarged, beyond all that you can now conceive; and you will be filled with bliss, to the utmost extent of your capacity to contain it. What will you think of earthly honors and enjoyments then? Truly you will wonder how it was ever possible for you to be so enchanted with them as you once were. The sight of Christ "face to face, [1 Corinthians 13:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.12)" will swallow up every inferior object, even as the meridian sun eclipses and banishes the stars! Then your bliss will be complete, because there will no longer remain any object to distract your mind, or so much as a thought that does not emanate from, and center in, your Savior and your King. Methinks, in the anticipation of that day, I hear you already saying, "Hallelujah; for the Lord God omnipotent reigns! [Revelation 19:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.6)."

***~~#891~~***

***~~CHRIST A SUITABLE AND ALL SUFFICIENT HELP~~***

***~~[Isaiah 25:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.4)~~***

"You have been:  
 a refuge for the poor,  
 a refuge for the needy in his distress,  
 a shelter from the storm  
 and a shade from the heat."

It is generally thought that no great comfort can arise from meditating upon God; and this is true, as far as it respects those who are determined to live in sin. But to those who desire to serve and enjoy God, there cannot be a richer source of consolation! A view of his attributes, as displayed in the works of his providence and grace, would soon elevate our minds, and turn our fears and sorrows into "thanksgiving and the voice of melody!"

We find the prophet breaking forth into rapture, "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name;" but what was the foundation of this joy? It was, as he adds, "for you have done wonderful things, verse 1;" and what those wonders were, he informs us in the words which we are about to consider, in which we may see,

***~~I. What is here supposed respecting the Lord's people.~~***

We forbear to mention the temporal calamities which God's people are called to suffer, because they are common to the wicked as well as to the righteous. But there are many and severe afflictions peculiar to the godly.

***~~1. The godly are often in great distress, from a sense of guilt and danger.~~***

*When people first begin to turn to God, they are often filled with horror at the sight of their past iniquities, and terrified with apprehensions of the wrath they have so justly merited.* However "stout-hearted" any man may have been in the days of his ignorance, he no sooner sees what transgressions he has committed, and what a God he has defied, than, like Belshazzar at the sight of the hand-writing on the wall—his loins are loosed with fear, and his knees, as it were, smite one against the other! [Daniel 5:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 5.5-6).

The jailor, it should seem, from his treatment of Paul and Silas, was of a very ferocious disposition; but, when God smote him with a sense of sin, how was his heart appalled! He "sprang in with trembling, end cried out before his prisoners: Sirs, What must I do to be saved! [Acts 16:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.29-30)."

Thus it is, in a greater or less degree, with all; and many in this state have even envied the beasts the privilege of annihilation.

***~~2. The godly are often in great distress, from the persecutions of an ungodly world.~~***

From the days of Cain, even to this present hour, they who have been born after the flesh have persecuted those who were born after the Spirit, [Galatians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.29). [1 John 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.12). And the more eminent any have been for piety, the more have they been the objects of the world's hatred and contempt. With what astonishing cruelty were the saints of old treated! They, of whom God says, the world was not worthy, were made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things! [Hebrews 11:36-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.36-38). 1 Corinthians 4:13.

What though the same violence does not rage at present? Is the enmity of the carnal heart slain? Does not the same aversion to gospel religion exist now as in former times? and is it not still found in many instances that our "greatest foes are those of our own household?" Yes, and in many instances is this a source of deep affliction, even as "a terrible blast, and as a wintry storm."

***~~3. The godly are often in great distress, from the temptations of Satan.~~***

*Whoever will set himself to seek the Lord must prepare his soul for temptation.* Satan will not lose any of his vassals without endeavoring to reduce them to their former state of subjection. For this end he will harass the soul with his temptations, which, as fiery darts, will inflame it with evil passions, and with a "venom will even drink up the spirits! [Ephesians 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.16). [Job 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 6.4)."

How inexpressibly grievous these are to a child of God, may be seen by the bitter complaints of Paul respecting that thorn in his flesh, and his entreaties for deliverance from the buffetings of Satan, [2 Corinthians 12:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.7-8).

Never does a saint feel himself more "needy and distressed" than in circumstances like these; nor could any endure this "conflict with the principalities and powers of darkness," if not upheld by an invisible and almighty arm.

***~~4. The godly are often in great distress, from the hidings of God's face.~~***

God oftentimes, for wise and gracious ends, withdraws himself from his people, and allows them to "walk in darkness for a season, and without light. And this is incomparably the most distressing of all the trials that can be endured in this world. Our blessed Lord, who never complained of the cruelties exercised upon his *body*, cried out with inexpressible anguish, by reason of the dereliction he experienced in his *soul*, "My God, my God! why have you forsaken me! [Matthew 27:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.46)."

Many too of his dearest children have mourned like him, and been ready to conclude that God had forsaken and forgotten them, [Isaiah 49:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14). [Psalm 77:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-9). To estimate aright the greatness of this affliction, it must be felt; for neither words can express, nor imagination conceive, the gloom and misery of a deserted soul!

Were we to view them in this light only, we should dread, rather than desire, to be of their number. But in the text, we see,

***~~II. God's compassionate regard towards the godly.~~***

God is never more concerned about his people than when they are "in heaviness through manifold trials."

***~~1. God himself will be a suitable help to His people.~~***

As the trials of the saints are various, so, of course, must their necessities be also; but whatever it is that they need, they shall surely receive it out of the Redeemer's fullness.

Is it a sense of guilt that oppresses them? God will "apply to their lips a live coal from the altar, and say, Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged! [Isaiah 6:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.6-7)."

Are they bowed down under a weight of persecution, and destitute of human aid? He will strengthen them in their inward man, that they shall even rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for his sake [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.41). [2 Timothy 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.17).

Are they buffeted by Satan? He will clothe them with armor, whereby they shall be enabled to resist him manfully, and to bruise him under their feet, [Ephesians 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.11).

Has he himself forsaken them? It shall be but for a little moment, [Isaiah 54:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.7-8), that they may learn when in darkness to stay themselves on him, [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10), and rejoice with more exalted joy in the renewed expressions of his love.

Thus it is intimated in the text itself, that whether it is strength or protection, or whatever else, that we need—God will surely impart it to us.

***~~2. God himself will be a seasonable help to His people.~~***

God may allow his people to lie a considerable time under their afflictions; but in the very instant that he sees it best to interpose, he will come to their support. This is not only intimated in the *parable of the Importunate Widow*, but absolutely promised, as a deduction from that parable, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bears long with them? Truly I say unto you that he will avenge them speedily! [Luke 18:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.7-8)," that is, in the very best and fittest season.

And how remarkably was this exemplified in his conduct towards *Abraham!* That holy patriarch was made to go three days' journey to the mountain where he was to slay his son; he was permitted to take the wood, the fire, the knife, for the execution of the divine command; he was even allowed to bind his son, and lift up the knife that was instantly to inflict the fatal wound; and then it was that God stopped him by a voice from Heaven.

Thus in ten thousand other instances has that proverb been verified, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, [Genesis 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.14).

And it is remarkable that the poor illiterate fishermen, who followed our Lord, were even ordered not to think beforehand what they should say, when summoned before their rulers, but to expect that the Holy Spirit should suggest to them at the moment what they ought to speak, [Matthew 10:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.19-20).

And though their example does not justify a lack of foresight and premeditation in us—yet the promise made to them warrants us to look to God as a help, a present, "a very present help in the time of trouble! [Psalm 46:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.1);" and to expect his interposition then, when "the storm" would otherwise overwhelm us.

***~~3. God himself will be a sufficient help to His people..~~***

However "needy and distressed" we are, God is able to support and deliver us. Though we be as "worms—yet will he enable us to thresh the mountains, [Isaiah 41:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.14-15). [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.25)." And though earth and Hell conspire against us—yet will he make us "more than conquerors." Our weakness is no ground of discouragement; for "his strength shall be perfected in our weakness! [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)." He has undertaken for us, and he will perform his engagements; and, sooner than not make us triumph over our enemies, he would cause "the very stars in their courses to fight for us, [Judges 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 5.20)," or the earth to open and swallow up our adversaries! Never has a child of God yet failed for lack of his effectual aid; nor shall anyone to all eternity; sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than "one of his little ones shall perish! [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14)."

***~~From this subject we may clearly see,~~***

***~~1. The true nature of experimental religion.~~***

*The mere acknowledging of gospel truths does not constitute real piety; it is the experience of them in the soul that is the foundation, and indeed the very essence, of vital godliness!*Our blessed Lord has said, "Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28);" and this comprehends all the whole work of God's grace upon the soul.

To be heavy-laden with a sense of sin; to seek rest in Christ; and to be brought by the Lord Jesus to an entire rest in God as our Father and our Friend—this, I say, is true religion; and the experience of this on earth will lead assuredly to the everlasting experience of it in Heaven! [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6).

**2. The true nature of practical religion.**

*"A form of godliness" may easily exist "without any of its power." Only do we serve the Lord Jesus aright, when we are conformed to the image of Christ, and have learned to walk as he walked."* "Love is the very fulfilling of the law!" and this love of Christ to us is the true pattern for our love to each other, [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.2). This is what befits us "as the elect of God, [Colossians 3:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.12-14);" and this will be the test of our obedience in the day of judgment, [Matthew 25:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.34-36). "Let the same mind then be in you, as was in Christ Jesus, [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.5)." And let this be the habitual exercise of it as far as your circumstances will admit.

***~~#892~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF RICHEST BLESSINGS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 25:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.6-8)~~***

KJV. "In this mountain shall the Lord Almighty make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord has spoken it."

NIV "On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken."

*Many passages of Scripture, which, from the language, might be supposed to belong to the Jewish dispensation only, will be found to refer in a more especial manner to the times of the Gospel.*

The "mountain" so frequently mentioned in this place was Mount Zion, which was distinguished above all other mountains by being the peculiar residence of God; and it would seem that all the great things which God promised to the world, were to be transacted upon that spot. But *Mount Zion was a type of the Gospel Church, wherein God yet more eminently dwells; and it is in the Church of Christ that he bestows the blessings which are here promised.*

***~~I. The Gospel affords food to the hungry.~~***

***~~The Gospel calls us to a luxurious feast.~~***

The terms in which this feast is expressed, are evidently intended to raise in our minds the highest possible conceptions of its excellency.

"A feast" is far more than a common meal, and conveys an idea of costliness and abundance. A feast "of fat things" imports that the choicest provisions are set forth; and the fat things being "full of marrow," suggests, that no expense is spared in procuring whatever can provoke the appetite of the guests, or afford them pleasure.

But "wines" are also added; wines that have contracted a delicious flavor by being long kept "upon the lees;" and wines "well refined," that are bright as a ruby, that "sparkle in the glass," and that delight the eye while they gratify the palate.

What are we to understand from this accumulation of ideas, but that, as the choicest viands administer nourishment and comfort to the body—so *the Gospel provides everything which can exhilarate and support the soul.* After all, this representation falls very far short of the truth; for the promises of the Gospel are infinitely sweeter to the hungering and thirsting soul, than the most exquisite food can be to our taste. Let but a sinner, who pants after pardon, be enabled to apply to his soul that promise of Jehovah, that "crimson sins shall be made white as snow," or that word of Christ, that "whoever comes to him he will never cast out;" what transports of joy will he not feel! How will he be "filled as with marrow and fatness, while he praises his God with joyful lips!" What strength did that word, "My grace is sufficient for you," administer to Paul under the buffetings of Satan! In the strength of that one meal Elijah was enabled to go on, not for forty days only, but to the last hour of his life, [1 Kings 19:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.7-8). And such is the Gospel to all who cordially embrace it!

***~~This feast God has himself prepared for all people.~~***

It is none other than "the Lord Almighty" who has spread this table at his own expense. And he invites "all people," not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also; yes, the very vilest of the human race! He sends out his servants into the highways and hedges, to call the halt, the lame, and the blind, and orders them to take no refusal, but to compel them to come in, [Matthew 22:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.4). [Luke 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.17); [Luke 14:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.21-22)." Yes, though in every succeeding age there have been myriads of guests brought in—yet his message to us is, "yet there is room!"

But, as this feast can be of no use to those who feel not their need of it, nor discern its excellency, the Gospel suits itself to our necessities:

***~~II. The Gospel affords light to the blind.~~***

***~~There is a thick, impenetrable "veil" over the hearts of men.~~***

The *lusts*and *prejudices*of men cast a film over their eyes, and incapacitate them from discerning spiritual things; and *Satan*by his subtle devices confirms their blindness, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4). As the Jews, even while Moses was read to them every Sabbath day, were unable, by reason of the veil that was upon their hearts, to comprehend the great ends and purposes of the Mosaic dispensation, 2 Corinthians 3:14-15, so thousands who live under the light of the Gospel are total strangers to its fundamental truths; or admit them only in theory, while they are destitute of any experimental knowledge of them in their hearts. "They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; hearts, but understand not!"

***~~But God by his Gospel removes this veil.~~***

"He who commanded light to shine out of darkness will shine into the hearts" of those who seek him. "The things which flesh and blood could never have discovered, he will reveal unto them, [Matthew 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.17)." He will show them:  
the evil of sin,  
the depravity of their hearts,  
the fullness and suitableness of Christ,  
the stability of the covenant,  
together with everything else which they need to know.

He will not merely turn aside the veil, and give them a transient view of the holy of holies, but will "destroy" the veil, and "rend it in pieces from the top to the bottom."

It is true, this clear knowledge of divine truth will not be imparted all at once; but it shall gradually increase, until they "see as they are seen, and know as they are known."

To complete the happiness of his people:

***~~III. The Gospel promises victory to the oppressed.~~***

The former part of the text refers to the apostolic and millennial periods; but the latter will not be accomplished until the day of judgment. To that season in particular Paul applies the words before us, [1 Corinthians 15:54](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.54). Taking him for our guide, we are in no danger of misinterpreting their import, while we say:

***~~1. God will rescue us from the power of death.~~***

Death is even now disarmed of its sting; and the king of terrors is made our friend. Those who through the Gospel are enabled to live unto Christ, may justly account it "gain to die;" *not life only, but even death itself, is numbered among their treasures!*[Philippians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21). [1 Corinthians 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22). Such is their victory over it, that it is an object of hope and desire rather than of terror and aversion, [Philippians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.23); and when it comes, they are not so properly said to die, as to "fall asleep in Jesus." Nor will death's apparent triumphs be of long duration; for though death's has swallowed up mankind with insatiable avidity—it shall itself "be swallowed up in victory," and not a vestige of it ever again be found among the saints of God!

**2.** **God will rescue us from the sorrows of sin.**

While we continue in the body, there will be occasion for us to "go on our way weeping." But even now the sorrows of believers are widely different from the sorrows of the world; instead of corroding the heart, they bring a peace along with them; and the people who are most affected with them, so far from wishing to get rid of them, desire to have them more deep and abiding.

But before long they shall sully the face no more; but shall be "wiped away" by the hand of a compassionate Father, and be followed by a harvest of eternal joy! [Revelation 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.4); [Revelation 7:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.16-17).

***~~3. God will rescue us from the reproaches of the world.~~***

There is scarcely anything which an ungodly world will not say or do, to asperse the character of the godly, and to destroy their peace. But God in this world so far "takes away their rebuke," as often to manifest himself to them, and to interpose visibly on their behalf—see Joseph, Daniel, the Hebrew Youths. etc. But in a little time "He will bring forth their righteousness as the noon day;" and those who were regarded "as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things," shall be openly acknowledged as the children of the living God!

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. To those who are living at a distance from God.~~***

Whatever you may promise yourselves from the enjoyment of this world, you in reality are feeding only on husks! And however you may boast of attainments in philosophy, there is a veil on your hearts that hides from you all spiritual knowledge. Besides, whatever satisfaction you feel, or whatever reputation you enjoy, death will speedily swallow up both you and it, and will consign you over to everlasting shame and misery!

Say, then, whether you have not made a wretched choice, and whether the mourning and despised Christian be not in a far happier state than you? It is not however too late for you to repent; the invitations of the Gospel are sent to you as well as to others; and if you put away your vain excuses, and return to God as prodigals, you shall find a cordial welcome, and feast this very hour on the fatted calf! O that the "scales may fall from your eyes;" and that, being "brought from darkness unto light, you may be turned from the power of Satan unto God!"

***~~2. To those who have come to God's holy mountain.~~***

You find that the promises of the Gospel have not disappointed you. If you are not "satisfied with the plenteousness of God's house," it is not because the provisions are withheld from you, but because you lack an appetite for them. "Do not be straitened in yourselves;" and be sure you never shall be straitened in your God, "open your mouth wide, and he will fill it."

Above all things remember to feed continually on "the body and blood of your beloved Lord; for his flesh is food indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, [John 6:54-55](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.54-55)."

Soon you shall be called to the banquet above, where "your Lord shall gird himself and come forth to serve you." Then shall these promises receive their full accomplishment; and you shall possess that "fullness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore!"

***~~#893~~***

***~~CHRIST'S COMING A GROUND OF JOY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 25:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.9)~~***

"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

If the benefits of Christianity were duly estimated by us, there would be no bounds to our attachment to it, or our delight in it. What an assemblage of images have we in the verses immediately preceding my text, to display the excellence of our holy religion! In truth, the human mind is scarcely capable of combining such a variety of ideas as are here presented to us, so as to reduce them to one common focus, and at one view to comprehend them all. But the common result of all will surely be that which is declared in my text.

The whole redeemed Church of God, and every individual member of it, will be impressed alike with wonder and admiration at a discovery of our redeeming God, and will exclaim, "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!"

***~~I. Let us consider this as the language of the Church at large.~~***

The time spoken of in Scripture as "that day" sometimes refers to one period, and sometimes to another; and frequently comprehends several distinct periods, in which the things predicted shall receive a partial and progressive accomplishment.

In the passage before us, the prophet may be considered as comprehending in his view:

***~~1. The apostolic age.~~***

For many hundred years had the Jews been waiting for the Messiah's coming; and at that precise time, when Jesus came, were they "expecting him, as the consolation of Israel," and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem." And no sooner was he born into the world, than an angel appeared to certain shepherds, to announce his coming; saying, "Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born, this day, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord [Luke 2:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.10-11)."

As for the joy which these tidings excited, we may judge of it, not only from the exultation of the shepherds, but from the expressions of that aged saint, who, on taking the infant Savior in his arms, exclaimed, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation! [Luke 2:25-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.25-30)."

***~~2. The millennial period.~~***

The Church is now expecting a second coming of our Lord, when he shall take to him his great power, and reign over the face of the whole earth. We truly believe that the time is near at hand, when "all kings shall bow down before him, and all nations shall serve him," and "all the kingdoms of the world become his undivided empire."

Oh! what joy will his coming diffuse throughout the whole intelligent creation, both of Jews and Gentiles! Of that time the Prophet Isaiah speaks, when he says, "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes, [Isaiah 66:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.10-14)."

And in the book of Revelation, the same event is thus announced, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings; saying, *Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride has made herself ready! [Revelation 19:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.6-7)."

But there will be yet a further accomplishment of our text at,

***~~3. The day of judgment.~~***

All that are in the graves are waiting for the Savior's coming; and when we consign any saint to the silent tomb, we do it in an assured expectation that, at the appointed hour, he shall rise again to "meet the Lord in the air." The very spirits that are before the throne of God are also waiting for that blessed day, when, by their re-union with the body, their bliss shall be complete, and their felicity entire.

To that period we may conceive the Apostle refers, when he says, "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body, [Romans 8:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.22-23)." At all events, we are sure that it is that period which "the grace of God" teaches us to be "looking for, even for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, [Titus 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.13)."

How will every saint, even from Adam to that very hour, then say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation!" Then, indeed, will "death be swallowed up in victory, and all tears be wiped from off all faces, verse 7, 8," and the Savior's coming be celebrated in this universal song.

But we need not wait for any distant seasons; for even now may our text be taken:

***~~II. As the language of every individual believer.~~***

Yes, now, at this present moment, does the believer thus express himself:

***~~1. In the recollection of what is past.~~***

Long has he waited upon God, that he might obtain mercy to his soul. To "win Christ, and be found in him," has been the supreme object of his desire. For this he has wept, and prayed, and labored, if by any means he might obtain it! And now, at last, Christ has revealed himself to him, as an able and all-sufficient Savior.

Now, then, with grateful surprise, he exclaims, 'Lo, this is my God, for whom I have waited and prayed! this is my Lord, whom alone, and above all things, I have desired to behold. I once thought the time long; but now I regret not the troubles which I endured while seeking after him; had they been ten times as pungent, or had I endured them ten times as long—I would not now repine; one view of him as reconciled to me, and one hour spent in communion with him, is sufficient to repay me for a whole life of sorrow and suspense!'

I will appeal to all, whether any man, who can say, "He has taken me out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay," does not find occasion also to add, "He has put a new song into my mouth, even thanksgiving to our God! [Psalm 40:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.1-3)."

***~~2. In the anticipation of what is yet future.~~***

Doubtless he looks forward to many conflicts with sin and Satan; he sees a host of enemies arrayed against him, enemies with whom he would be utterly unable to cope; but he knows in whom he has believed; and, in dependence on the Savior, he defies every adversary, saying, "In the Lord I put my trust; I will not fear what either men or devils can do against me! [Psalm 27:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.1)." In answer to the remonstrances of a guilty conscience, he replies, "My Lord will save me!" and, if the number or power of his enemies is urged against him, he answers with confidence, "This Savior is my God; and if He is for me, who can be against me?" This is He for whom I have waited; and He will save me. "In his name I set up my banners;" and in reliance upon Him, I know that no enemy shall prevail against me, or "ever pluck me out of his hands!" Yes, "I will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation! [Psalm 20:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 20.5);" and though I "see my Savior no otherwise than by faith, I will rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

**APPLICATION.**

What now shall I say, to commend this Savior to you?

***~~1. Let your expectations from him be enlarged.~~***

It is not possible for you to expect too much. If your sins were as numerous as the sands upon the sea-shore, you might expect that he would "blot them all out as a morning cloud," or "cast them behind him into the depths of the sea." If he who has undertaken to save you is "God," then what have you to fear? And if he have promised to be "a God unto you," it is not possible that you should ever lack. You may stretch your requests to the utmost bounds of human language to express, or of human ingenuity to conceive—and they shall fall infinitely short of what you shall surely realize, if he himself is indeed yours. "All things are yours, if you belong to Christ." Adopt the language of David, [Psalm 62:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 62.5-8)."

***~~2. Let your joy in him abound.~~***

Doubtless, while you are in the body, you will have more or less cause for sorrow. But methinks, if you were out of the body, you could scarcely have more ground for joy. Only reflect on *him*who has undertaken to save you, or on the *salvation*which he has engaged to bestow upon you; and your whole life will be one continued scene of joyful exultation and of holy triumph. It will be, in short, a very Heaven upon earth!

***~~#894~~***

***~~TRUST IN GOD RECOMMENDED~~***

**[Isaiah 26:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.3-4)**

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you; because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

It was designed of God that under the Gospel dispensation his people should enjoy a state of very exalted happiness. The *Jews*had a spirit of bondage, as servants; *we*have a spirit of adoption, as sons.

In conformity with this idea, the prophet, in the preceding chapter, speaks of the Lord as spreading a rich luxurious feast for all nations, [Isaiah 25:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.6); and, in the chapter before us, records "A song which should be sung" by all the guests, verse 1. And well indeed may they sing, who are enabled to make such an appeal to God, as that which we have just read; well may they sing, who have the Lord Jehovah himself engaged to keep them in perfect peace.

May our hearts be tuned to join in this Divine anthem, while we:

**I. Show what blessedness God will confer on his believing people.**

It is said by the voice of inspiration, "The faithful man shall abound with blessings, [Proverbs 28:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.20);" and again, "God will bless his people with peace, [Psalm 29:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 29.11)."

***~~The unbeliever is an utter stranger to true peace.~~***

He may be stupid and insensible as a beast; but he can know nothing of real peace; even his apathy vanishes when once he begins to think of death and judgment. As his serenity resembles that of the irrational creation; so it arises from a similar source, a lack of foresight or reflection in reference to the concerns of his soul. If he thinks of God, he is troubled, and will gladly have recourse to anything to banish such uneasy reflections from his mind. This is his state, even when in the midst of all that the world accounts good and great; but how utterly devoid of peace is he, when once he is awakened to a sense of his real condition! Then he is full of terror, like the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; and, if he does not think of suicide, like the affrighted Jailor, he would gladly exchange condition with the beasts, if only the dissolution of the physical life might put an eternal period to his existence.

We speak not of the tumultuous passions by which the ungodly are agitated; because there are some who by the mere force of philosophy are enabled in a very great degree to moderate their feelings. But *none can reflect on an eternity beyond the grave, without being appalled at the thought of the doom that awaits them*, if they are unprepared to meet their God; so true is that which is spoken by the prophet, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest; there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked! [Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.20-21)."

***~~But God promises this blessing to every believer.~~***

"The man whose mind is stayed on God, shall be kept in perfect peace."

He shall have peace in relation to his pardon and acceptance with God. Often in the day of his flesh did our Lord assure people that their sins, though numerous, were forgiven, [Matthew 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.2). [Luke 7:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.47); and will he be less gracious to his people now? Though he will not give us that assurance by any audible voice, he will by the inward witness of his Spirit, [Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.16). As once he sent "a Seraphim to take a live coal from off his altar, and to touch with it the prophet's lips, and to say to him, Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged, [Isaiah 6:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.6-7)," so will he now send his Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of promise, to apply the promises to our souls, and to be within us a pledge of our heavenly inheritance! [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14).

The believer shall have peace also in relation to his perseverance in the divine life. He "knows in whom he has believed, and that he is able to keep that which has been committed to him, 2 Timothy 1:12." He knows that his Lord and Savior is "able to keep him from falling, and to present him faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24." Snd while he contemplates Heaven as an "inheritance reserved for him, he has the comfort of reflecting that he also is kept for it, even by the power of God through faith unto everlasting salvation! [1 Peter 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.4-5)." Persuaded as he is that "He is faithful who has promised, [Hebrews 10:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.23)," and "able also to perform" his Word, [Romans 4:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.21), he is "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in him will perform it until the day of Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)," and "will preserve him blameless unto his heavenly kingdom! [2 Timothy 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.18)."

He shall have peace also in relation to everything that may occur in his way to Heaven. Numberless things arise of a temporal or spiritual nature to disturb the minds of those who are weak in faith; but when once "the mind is stayed on God," all these distractions cease.

God is acknowledged as the author of all that is done, whether good or evil; not a sparrow, or a hair of our heads, falls to the ground, but by his special permission; and from whatever quarter trials arise, whether from voluntary agents, or unconscious elements, God is regarded as their true and proper source, [Job 1:14-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 1.14-21), and that consideration reconciles the soul to the dispensation, [Psalm 39:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 39.9). Yes, he acquiesces in it, assured that "all things shall work together for his good! [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28)." He is anxious for nothing, because he "casts all his care on God, [1 Peter 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.7);" and in humble prayer commits everything to his heavenly Father's all-wise disposal; and thus in a measure enjoys as much tranquility, in relation to future events, as the birds of the air, or the lilies of the field! [Matthew 6:25-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.25-34).

***~~This blessing God will bestow upon him, "because he puts his trust in Him."~~***

There is nothing meritorious in faith, any more than in other graces; but there is in faith a power peculiar to itself; it engages the Most High God, and, if we might dare to use such an expression, we would almost say, binds him to exert himself in our behalf.

When we lay hold on his Word by faith, God feels his own honor pledged to fulfill our desire, and not to allow us to be disappointed of our hope. Indeed, inasmuch as faith pre-eminently honors him, he delights to honor it; and to such a degree would he honor it, that, "if we had faith only as a grain of mustard-seed," that analogy would be realized in our experience; we should be rooted up from this world, as a sycamore-tree from the earth; and though liable in ourselves to be tossed about by every wave, we should be fixed immovably amidst the most tempestuous billows! [Luke 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.6).

This is strongly intimated in the very words of our text, where the literal expression, as pointed out in the margin, is, "You will keep him in peace, peace," that is . . .  
in indubitably certain peace,  
in uninterruptedly abiding peace,  
and in richly abundant peace!

If only we cherished an "earnest expectation and hope" in God, truly "we would never be ashamed or confounded world without end! [Philippians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.20). [Isaiah 45:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.17)."

Having thus shown what God has prepared for those who love him, we would,

***~~II. Urge you to seek that blessedness in God's appointed way.~~***

God calls us all to trust in him:

***~~1. Consider what a God we have to trust in.~~***

Consider what "exceeding great and precious promises he has given to us." There is not a situation or a circumstance wherein we can be placed, but God has given us promises exactly suited to it. It would be a highly profitable employment to extract from the Scriptures for ourselves the various promises contained in them, and especially those which apply more particularly to our own case; and then to spread them from time to time before our God in prayer. What sweet encouragement would this afford us, in all our addresses at the throne of grace; and what holy confidence would it create in us!

If we have only a promise from a *man*like ourselves, it tends exceedingly to compose our minds; but how much more would this effect arise from apprehending the promises of*a faithful God!*

But consider also how able God is to perform all that he has promised to us. Truly "with him is everlasting strength!" "There is nothing impossible with him." "It is alike with him to save by many or by few." He can save with means, or without means, or against means.

As for our weakness, or the strength of our enemies—it makes no difference to him. In the words following our text, it is said, "He will bring down those who dwell on high; the lofty city, he lays it low; he lays it low, even to the ground; he brings it even to the dust." Is it asked, By whom he will do this? it is added, "The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy! verse 5, 6. See also ch. 14:2." Yes, "He will strengthen the spoiler against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress, [Amos 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 5.9)." *The weaker we are in our own apprehension, the more strong we are in reality; because "his power shall rest upon us," and "his strength shall be perfected in our weakness*,[2 Corinthians 12:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9-10)."

***~~2. Let us trust in him with our whole hearts.~~***

There are people who imagine they trust in God, when, in fact, they are trusting only in their own delusions, [Isaiah 48:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.1-2). There must be an express renunciation of every other hope, [Proverbs 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 3.5-6), and an actual committing of our way to him in prayer, [Psalm 62:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 62.8). There must be a direct exercise of faith in him, as *able* and *willing*to effect whatever our necessities require; and a firm persuasion that he will do that which shall in the outcome be best for us. This is implied in having "the mind stayed on him."

We have a fine description of this state of mind contained in the prophecies of Isaiah; it is primarily indeed applicable to the Messiah; but is proper also to be realized in the experience of all the saints; since "all who fear the Lord" are extorted in seasons of the deepest darkness and distress to set it before them as a model, and, after his example, to stay themselves upon their God, [Isaiah 50:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.7-10). How important this duty is, may be inferred from the reiterated injunctions given us respecting it. [Psalm 115:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 115.9-11).

***~~3. Let us then "trust in God at all times."~~***

In times of ease and security, let us remember that we are in his hands, and not be saying with ourselves, "My mountain stands strong; I shall not be moved [Psalm 30:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.7)."

In times of trouble and distress, let us "not stagger at the promises through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God." Let us, after the example of David, say, "My soul, wait only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation, and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God! [Psalm 62:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 62.5-7)."

This is the kind of trust to which alone the promise is made. "If our faith wavers, we shall receive nothing from the Lord, [James 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.6-7);" but if we commit our every concern to him, "our very thoughts," the most fluctuating of all things, "shall be established, [Proverbs 16:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 16.3)," and "the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep (the affections of) our hearts and (the imaginations of) our minds, through Christ Jesus! [Philippians 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.6-7)."

**ADDRESS.**

***~~1. Those who know nothing of this blessedness.~~***

Do not suppose that because you do not experience the peace of God, it has no existence in the believer's mind; for it is the legacy of Christ to all his people, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you! [John 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.27);" and it is indeed "a peace that passes all understanding." It is not a mere absence of feeling, but . . .  
a positive sense of reconciliation with God,  
a sweet consciousness of being under his protecting care,  
and a humble—yet confident, expectation, that he will order everything for our eternal good!

We cannot give a juster picture of it, than by referring you to the description given of it by the sweet singer of Israel in Psalm 23. Nothing alarms him, or disturbs his rest, because he knows that "his God is for him, and that therefore none can, with any effect, be against him! [Romans 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.31)." "His God gives him quietness; Who then can make trouble! [Job 34:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 34.29)."

And will you be content to continue a stranger to this happiness? Why should you do so? Christ has purchased it for "those who are afar off, as well as those who are near, [Ephesians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.17);" and he will confer it in rich abundance on all who call upon him, [Romans 10:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.11-13).

***~~2. Those who through the weakness of their faith do not yet partake of it.~~***

How dishonorable is your conduct, and injurious to that God who redeemed you by the blood of his only dear Son! *Whom has he ever deceived, that you cannot rely upon his promises?*In what instance has he ever shown himself deficient, either in faithfulness or power? What enemies are you to your own happiness, at the time that you are so dishonoring him! "Has he not said to you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God, [John 11:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.40)." "Believe in the Lord, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper, [2 Chronicles 20:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 20.20)." But, "if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established, [Isaiah 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.9)."

***~~3. Those who profess to enjoy that peace.~~***

Well may we say with David, "O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you, [Psalm 84:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.12);" blessed is the man who with humble confidence can approach you, saying, "O God, you are my God!" And are any of you brought to this happy state? O "cast not away your confidence, which has such great recompense of reward, [Hebrews 10:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.35);" for then, and then only, "are we partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end, [Hebrews 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.14)."

But, on the other hand, beware lest you abuse that confidence, and walk unworthy of your high calling; for, "if God has spoken peace" unto your souls, he especially enjoins you "never more to return to folly, [Psalm 85:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.8)."

Let it be seen then, what is the genuine effect of saving faith; and, if you call yourselves sons of God, and profess to have your portion with him in the world to come, then remember, that "every one that has this hope in him, purifies himself even as He is pure! 1 [John 3:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.2-3)."

***~~#895~~***

***~~HUMILIATION WITH ZEAL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 26:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.13)~~***

KJV. "O Lord our God, other lords besides you have had dominion over us; but by you alone will we make mention of your name."

Many devout songs are composed in Scripture for the use of God's Church and people in the latter day. But, amidst their praises for mercies given unto them, care is taken to keep up in their minds a remembrance of their former sins, and a sense of those duties which they owe to their heavenly Benefactor. On a review of the past, they are taught to acknowledge the evil of their ways; and in a prospect of the future, to consecrate themselves, with all due solemnity, to the service of their God. Now, at this season, New Year's Day, I cannot do better than recommend to your adoption,

***~~I. Their retrospective acknowledgment.~~***

It is probable, that, in the words before us, respect is had to the civil bondage to which that nation had again and again been reduced on account of their iniquities, [2 Chronicles 28:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 28.5-6). [Nehemiah 9:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.36-37).

But, considering for what period the song is prepared, we cannot doubt but that there is a reference also to the moral bondage in which they have been held by their corruptions. And in this sense, the acknowledgment well befits us at this day; since we are told by an inspired Apostle, that "to whoever we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we obey, [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16)." And what has been our conduct through life?

The greater part of us have "served only our own lusts and pleasures [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3)."

Look at all around you; or, rather, look within your own bosoms; and say, to whom have your lives been devoted—to God, or Mammon? Truly, there is but too much reason to confess, that "God has not been in all our thoughts, [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4)."

Of those who have had some respect to God, still must this acknowledgment be required.

Other lords besides God, have had dominion over you. The *lip*and the *knee*perhaps you have devoted to Jehovah in the observance of outward duties, both in the public assemblies of the Church, and in your own closets; but where has been the heart? [Isaiah 29:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.13).

You "have had the *form*of godliness perhaps, but where has been the power? [2 Timothy 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.5).

Call to mind your prayers and your praises, how cold have they been! Have they not even frozen, as it were, upon your very lips?

On the other hand, see with what ardor and delight you have followed your earthly pursuits, whether intellectual or corporeal, and whether for pleasure or honor. But God says, "Give ME your heart!" and in the lack of this, all the services you have rendered him are no better than "the cutting off a dog's neck for sacrifice, or the offering of swine's blood! [Isaiah 66:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.3)."

While I recommend the deepest humiliation before God in the review of your past lives, I cannot but urge for your adoption what is here suggested for,

***~~II. Their prospective determination.~~***

The Israelites were forbidden to make mention of the name of any of the gods which were worshiped in the land of Canaan, [Exodus 23:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 23.13). [Joshua 23:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 23.7). By them no other name than that of Jehovah was to be uttered; because He, and he alone, was God. Hence "the making mention of his name was equivalent to an acknowledgment of him as the only true God, and was therefore considered as a just description of his special people, [Isaiah 62:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6). But this must be done in sincerity and truth; else it would be regarded only as an act of hypocrisy and profaneness, [Isaiah 48:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.1). It must comprehend all that attachment which is due to the supreme God, who is the only proper object of fear, or love, or confidence.

***~~Now, then, I recommend this to you,~~***

***~~1. As your duty.~~***

Who else is entitled to any of these regards, except in entire subordination and subserviency to Him?

***~~2. As your interest.~~***

Who can so recompense your services, or so avenge the lack of them?

**3. As your happiness.**

Ask the most successful votaries of this world what they have ever gained? Ask them what solid satisfaction they have ever found in all that the world could give them? Then ask the servants of the living God, whether they have not found his service to be perfect freedom, and "his ways to be ways of pleasantness and peace?"

As to the eternal world, it is almost superfluous for me to speak; for there are none so ignorant as not to know, that the pleasures of sense all "perish with the using," and that those only who seek their happiness in God can ever enjoy "the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore!"

I therefore confidently say to all of you without exception: Let this be the determination of you all—that henceforth you will make no mention of any name in a way of fear, or love, or confidence, but "the name of Jehovah only."

Thus far I have spoken to you as *men*only.

But what shall I say to you as *Christians*?

Tell me, whether, as "bought with the precious blood of Christ," you have any duty, any interest, any happiness—worthy of a moment's consideration, in comparison with his service, his honor, his glory! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20).

***~~Let me, in conclusion, submit to your consideration the following questions.~~***

**1.** Who among you does not need to make this retrospective acknowledgment?

**2.** What will the acknowledgment avail you, if you do not make, and carry into effect, the prospective determination?

**3.** To what purpose will it be to begin well, if you ever "become weary in well-doing? [Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.9)."

You must maintain "a patient continuance in well-doing, if ever you would attain eternal life! [Romans 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.7)." If ever you draw back, whatever your attainments for a season may have been, "you will draw back unto perdition;" for "God's soul can have no pleasure in you! [Hebrews 10:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.38-39)."

I must not, however, dismiss you without one most important and necessary caution.

*The resolution which I have recommended must not be made in your own strength, but entirely in dependence upon God!*This is very particularly intimated in my text, "By you alone will we make mention of your name." In the very words before the text is it said, "You have wrought all our works in us." Yes, "our sufficiency is of God alone! 2 Corinthians 3:5." The Apostle Paul himself was constrained to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am! [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10);" and if any of you confide for one moment in your own strength, you will fall, [Proverbs 28:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.26).

On the other hand, if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are assured, in this very Song, that your "strength shall be according to your day. Compare verse 3, 4 with Jude verse 24." "Be strong, then, in the Lord, and in the power of his might, [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10);" and then let the Psalmist's resolution be yours, and his song be yours, "My mouth shall show forth your righteousness and your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of your righteousness, of your righteousness alone! [Psalm 71:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 71.15-16)."

***~~#896~~***

***~~THE ONLY REFUGE OF SINNERS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 26:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.20-21)~~***

KJV. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity."

NIV. "Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins."

God has been pleased to manifest at all times such a tender concern for the welfare of his people, that he has scarcely ever done anything of importance, which he has not revealed to them beforehand by his servants the prophets, [Amos 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 3.7).

Did he determine to destroy the earth with a flood? He instructed Noah first to build an ark for the preservation of himself and his family, [Genesis 6:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.13-14).

Was he about to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah? He could not execute his vengeance until righteous Lot had retired to a place of safety, [Genesis 19:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 19.22).

Had he decreed to bring on Jerusalem such judgments as the world had never before seen? He warns his people to escape from it, and provides them a retreat in the neighboring mountains, [Luke 21:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.21-22).

Thus he had decreed the destruction of Babylon; and the preceding part of the chapter contains a hymn of triumph, which should be sung by his people on that occasion.

But, as there would be great danger of their being involved in the common calamity, he apprises them of his intention, and exhorts them to hide themselves, until the danger should be overpast. It is not, however, necessary to confine the words to this sense; because there are many other occasions on which God comes forth to punish mankind; and because *the advice given, is suitable to all such occasions.*

In discoursing on this passage, we shall call your attention to,

***~~I. The warning here given.~~***

Heaven is the habitation of God's holiness and glory, [Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.15); [Isaiah 63:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.15). And from thence he is said to "come forth," when he manifests himself in any signal manner upon earth, [Micah 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 1.3). And, alas! how often do the iniquities of men necessitate him to come down and visit them with his sore judgments. But there is one period in particular, when God shall come, not to punish one particular nation only, but all who shall have lived and died in sin, from the foundation of the world!

The day of judgment is called:  
"the day of wrath,"  
"the day of vengeance,"  
"the day of the revelation of God's righteous judgments,"  
"the day of the perdition of ungodly men,  
[Romans 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.5). [2 Peter 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.7)."

In that day the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom the heavens have received until the time of the restitution of all things, [Acts 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.21)," "shall come in power and great glory;" and the express end of his coming will be "to reveal his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, [Romans 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.18)."

Now God winks, as it were, at men's iniquities, [Acts 17:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.30); and endures with much patience and longsuffering the vessels of wrath that are fitting themselves for destruction, [Romans 9:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.22); yes, to such a degree does he exercise forbearance towards them, that scoffers are ready to say, Where is the promise of his coming? [2 Peter 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.3-4). But soon the time fixed for the exercise of his grace shall come to an end, and all the dead shall be summoned to his tribunal, to receive at his hands according to their works! [Revelation 20:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.12-13).

Nor let anyone think that gross iniquities only shall be noticed in that day; for God will "manifest even the thoughts of men's hearts," and "bring every secret thing into judgment 1 Corinthians 4:5." Then a forgetfulness of God, or a rejection of his Gospel, shall as surely be punished with everlasting destruction, as any of those sins which are more reprobated and condemned by the world! [Psalm 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 9.17). 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

The warning being of such universal and infinite importance, let us consider:

***~~II. The advice accompanying it.~~***

The exhortation in the text may simply import, that we should retire to our chambers to commune with our own hearts, and with our God, [Psalm 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 4.4). [Matthew 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.6). In this view it recommends the duty, the indispensably necessary duty of secret prayer.

But by "chambers" we may understand God himself, who is often spoken of in this light, [Psalm 90:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 90.1); [Psalm 57:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 57.1), and who is the sure refuge of all that flee unto him. Every perfection of his forms as it were, a hiding-place whitherto we may run for safety:  
his wisdom would be our guide,  
his power would be our defense,  
"his faithfulness and truth would be our shield and buckler."

To us, who are taught *to view God in the person of Christ*, the Word "chambers" may convey a more immediate intimation respecting Christ himself, who is our refuge, [Hebrews 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.18), and whom this very prophet describes as "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm! [Isaiah 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.2)." His person, work, and offices are a security to his people, that "they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life!"

To him therefore we should flee by faith, and hide ourselves from the impending judgments! As *Noah*entered into the ark [Genesis 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 7.7), which was the appointed means of delivering him from the deluge, and as the *Israelites*shut themselves up in their houses to escape the sword of the destroying angel, [Exodus 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.22); [Exodus 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.28), so *we are to take refuge, as it were, in Christ, that the sword of divine justice may not slay us, or the deluge of God's wrath overwhelm us!*

While we listen to the voice of God, we must not overlook:

***~~III. The particular manner in which the advice is given.~~***

***~~Almost every word of this exhortation contains an argument for our compliance with it.~~***

If we were bidden to hide ourselves in a pit or a dungeon, methinks, any place would be a welcome hiding-place from the wrath of God. But it is to our own "chamber," where everything is provided for our rest and comfort; yes, it is a pavilion, [Psalm 27:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.5), surrounded by guards, and furnished with royal dainties; it is even to the tabernacle, [Psalm 27:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.5). wherein God himself dwells, and where we shall have most intimate communion with him, that we are told to flee. *Shall we need any inducement to yield to such advice?*

If we cannot endure confinement (though surely we can have no reason to complain of that in such a retreat) we are told it is to be only for "a moment," yes, lest that should appear too long, it is said to be only for "a little moment." Did the Israelites think a single night too long, when they were to be screened from the destroying angel? And shall we think a moment, a little moment (for such in truth is the present life), too long to abide in Christ, that we may escape the wrath of an incensed God?

The certainty of success is another argument which may well induce us to follow this advice. Were there only a distant probability of obtaining deliverance from such unspeakable miseries, it were a very sufficient reason for our trying the experiment. But when success, as the text intimates, is certain to attend our efforts, shall we need any persuasion to exert ourselves?

On the other hand, the certainty that God's indignation must fall upon us, if we are not found in Christ, ought to operate powerfully on our hearts; for "who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger! [Nahum 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Nah 1.6)." The fate of those who despised the warnings of Moses, and sought not shelter from the storms of hail, shows us what we must expect, if we seek not refuge in Christ Jesus, [Exodus 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 9.19); [Exodus 9:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 9.25).

Above all, the *earnestness*of the exhortation should overcome the reluctance of our hearts. To enter fully into its spirit, we should conceive a parent, seeing a savage beast running towards his heedless and unprotected child in order to destroy him. The affrighted father calls to him in the agony of his mind, "Come, my son, run into the house, shut the door, hide yourself until the danger is overpast!"

Thus, precisely thus, does God himself cry to each of us. He knows our danger; he sees our inadvertence and, with all the anxiety of a parent, he calls to us. *Must we not be more deaf than adders, more obdurate than rocks, if we will not obey his voice?*

But there is one thing yet, which must on no account be overlooked. The language is intentionally changed from the plural to the singular, "Come, my people, enter you," etc.

One is ready to think, that he has no need to fear the indignation of God; another thinks he is too unworthy to be admitted into the chamber to which others have fled. But God addresses both the one and the other of them, "Enter you!" for, however secure you may think yourself, there is no security but in Christ; and "you;" for unworthy as you are, it is "your" chamber; it was erected for such as you; and the more unworthy you are in your own estimation, the more ready admittance shall you find there; the more certainly also shall you enjoy in it everlasting security!

Thus whether we consider:  
the *chamber*to which we are to flee,  
the *time*we are to abide in it,  
the *certainty*of success,  
the *danger*of delay, or  
the *earnest manner*in which God addresses every one of us in particular  
—we should without hesitation follow the advice, and seek deliverance in Christ our Lord! None of us should indulge security; none of us should give way to desponding fears. But, rejoicing that the chamber is not yet barred against us, we should all hide ourselves in it; nor venture out of it one single moment, until the danger is forever past!

***~~#897~~***

***~~GOD'S CARE FOR HIS CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 27:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.2-3)~~***

In that day—"Sing about a fruitful vineyard:  
I, the LORD, watch over it;  
I water it continually.  
I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it!"

God has provided abundant consolation for his Church in seasons of the greatest trial; and he calls upon her to enjoy her privileges and to celebrate them in a responsive song, Isaiah," in firm expectation of safety, amidst the most awful and desolating judgments.

The first part of the song, which is begun by Jehovah himself, leads us to show,

***~~I. Whence the Church derives her security.~~***

The Church, like a vineyard, is set apart in order to a more careful cultivation.

This idea is elsewhere more fully opened by the same prophet, [Isaiah 5:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.1-2); and it well illustrates *the care taken to separate the Church from the world at large, and the exertions made to render her fruitful in the fruits of righteousness*.

At the same time she also resembles a vineyard, in that she is exposed to the assaults of many who would destroy her.

A vineyard, however carefully fenced in, may have its fences broken down, and its plants destroyed, if it is not watched and guarded, [Isaiah 5:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.5-6). [Psalm 5:8-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 5.8-12). And the Church is open to the incursion of numerous and potent enemies, who would soon destroy her, if she were not protected from their assaults.

***~~But she is preserved by an invisible, but almighty Protector.~~***

Jehovah himself interposes on her behalf. He preserves her, as the bush in the midst of the flames, burning, but not consumed [Exodus 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.2). He protects his Church in general, that "the gates of Hell may not prevail against her;" and he keeps all her members in particular, that none may be ever plucked out of his hand! [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18). [John 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.29). [Psalm 46:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.5).

Nor shall we tremble for her future welfare, when we consider,

***~~II. What prospect she has of continued preservation.~~***

The same Jehovah who says, "I do keep her," adds also, "I will." Still keeping up the metaphor of a vineyard:

***~~1. He promises her sustenance.~~***

In a country that had only periodical rains, pools or reservoirs of water were indispensably necessary for the preservation of the vines in a season of drought. The Church too, and all the plants that are in it, need to be *watered*by God's Word, 1 Corinthians 3:6. [Deuteronomy 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.2), and Spirit, [Isaiah 44:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.3-4). God promises that he will take this care upon himself, and execute the work, as it were, with his own hands. Yes, inasmuch as we need fresh supplies of grace, not only every day, like a vineyard—but every moment, (as we need the light of the sun,) God suits his promise to our necessities, and tells us he will water us "every moment."

**2. He promises her protection.**

Our care in cultivating a vineyard would be in vain, unless we also protected it from those who would destroy it. Thus the Church, and every individual believer, would in vain receive the sustenance, if it did not enjoy also the protection, of Heaven. But God promises to afford his people continual, and effectual protection. He will guard them "night and day" (for "he neither slumbers nor sleeps") and will keep them, not only from destruction, but from any real injury, "No weapon formed against them shall ever prosper! [Isaiah 54:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.17)."

***~~We learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. We have here matter:~~***

For grateful recollection—that we have been preserved amidst so many enemies!

For humble confidence—that, though God may prune us, no trial shall come but what he judges necessary, 1 Peter 1:6 and shall work for our good! [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28).

God has, in this land, a remnant, over whom he watches with the tenderest care, and for whose sake we trust he will spare the whole nation. At all events we may be sure that he will provide a hiding-place for his Church; so that, whatever be the fate of others, it shall not be overwhelmed, [Isaiah 26:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.20-21). Let us not then trust in fleets and armies, but in the living God, who is *omnipresent*to behold, and *almighty*to defeat, the plots of our enemies; and let our supplications be made with increased frequency and fervor to him, whose past interpositions we have such abundant reason to acknowledge, [Psalm 124:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 124.1-6).

***~~2. Where to look in the midst of personal troubles.~~***

That which alone we ought to desire, is, that nothing may "hurt" us.

As for the *pruning*, which may render us more fruitful, [John 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.2), it should be received with submission and gratitude.

The evils that tend to our destruction, we may deprecate, with an assurance that our prayer shall be heard and answered. We need not fear the drought which occasions God to water us, nor the weapons that call forth his effectual interposition. Only let us render him fruits suited to the culture bestowed upon us; and nothing shall come upon us without necessity, [1 Peter 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.6); nothing which shall not eventually work for our good! [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28).

***~~#898~~***

***~~THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF ISRAEL~~***

**[Isaiah 27:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.6)**

KJV. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

NIV. "In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit!"

Of all the people upon the earth, the Jews have been, beyond comparison, the most highly honored by God. To no other nation did Jehovah ever manifest himself by such miraculous interpositions; nor was any other ever blessed with such rich and glorious communications. Even their present state, degraded as it is, evinces the peculiar interest which Jehovah takes in them; for, though scattered over the face of the whole earth, they still remain a separate people; and are reserved for higher honors, and more signal blessings, than their most favored ancestors ever enjoyed. The various nations that, in successive ages, have oppressed them, the Egyptian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Grecian, Roman—have all sunk beneath the yoke which their respective conquerors have laid upon them, and have been mingled with their invaders in one common mass.

Not so the Jews; they, though more cruelly oppressed than any nation, have still been kept distinct from the people among whom they have dwelt; and to this remarkable event the prophet refers, in the words following my text, "Has the LORD struck her as he struck down those who struck her? Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her?" No! "though God has made a full end of all other nations, he has not made a full end of them;" but he still has his eye upon them for good; and will, in due season, fulfill to them all his purposes of love and mercy, "In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit!"

In these words we may see:

***~~I. What the Jews are destined to become.~~***

Their state, both political and moral, is at present as low as can well be conceived. Scattered as they are among all nations, they have never yet been affiliated with any, so as to be regarded on a par with other citizens, or to enjoy the rights belonging to all the other classes of the community. The possession of property has been, until of late, universally denied them; so that they could never "take root" in any place, or be established in any country under Heaven.

Nor have they been less degraded in their moral and religious character. Being despised of all, they have not been accustomed to respect themselves, or to affect that high sense of honor which elevates the characters of other people. In their religious assemblies they have not even the semblance of piety; so carnal are they in their spirit, and so irreverent in their whole conduct. Not "a blossom or a bud" of true godliness is to be seen among them; and so far are they from "filling the world with fruit," that they are altogether immersed in selfishness, and lost to everything but worldly gain.

But far other things are reserved for them. The time is coming when they shall be established in knowledge, fertile in piety, and abundant in usefulness throughout the world.

**1. They shall be established in the knowledge of the true Messiah.**

They shall yet, I doubt not, "take root" in their own land. So plainly is their future restoration foretold, that, if I did not know that some pious people entertain doubts respecting it, I would be ready to say, it is impossible for anyone who believes the Scriptures to question it.

It is with their spiritual concerns alone that we are called to interest ourselves; and we are fully assured, that our labor, in this respect, shall not be in vain. They have hitherto been ever ready to run after false Messiahs. Indeed, they have never conceived aright respecting the character of the Messiah whom God has promised to them, nor of the nature of that kingdom which he will establish in the earth. But the time is coming, when the veil shall be taken from their hearts; and when they shall see, beyond a possibility of doubt, that Jesus is the true Messiah. They have in their own Scriptures that which will tend to their establishment far beyond any other people on earth; and we may well expect, that, when they shall be brought to the knowledge of Christ, they will "take root" in him with a firmness that shall never be shaken. They will see how the whole of their *ceremonial*law shadows him forth; and how the *moral*law also directs them to him. They will see that all the *prophets*, with one voice, point to him as the promised Messiah; and, from this weight of evidence, they will feel a conviction which heathen can scarcely ever attain. Exceeding deep will be their insight into the truths of the Gospel, when God shall "reveal to them," as he has promised, "the abundance of peace and truth, [Jeremiah 33:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.6)." "The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted! [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

When once "they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn," so clear will be their views, and so deep their convictions, that it will be as if they saw him face to face; as it is said, "Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes! [Isaiah 52:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.8)."

***~~2. They shall be fertile in the fruits of piety.~~***

As they are destined to "take root downward, so are they ordained also to bear fruit upward, [Isaiah 37:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.31)." In that day shall be fulfilled that gracious declaration of Jehovah, "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon, [Hosea 14:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.4-6)."

Much, very much, is spoken in the Scriptures respecting the spiritual change that shall then be wrought in them, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws! [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26-27)."

*In truth, the whole figurative language of prophecy, though primarily applicable to their temporal prosperity, has a further and far more important reference to their spiritual state*, "Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed! [Isaiah 55:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.13)."

***~~3. They shall be abundant in usefulness throughout the world.~~***

"They shall fill the face of the world with fruit." Yes, truly, they are God's appointed instruments for the conversion of the whole world. This is one end for which God, in his providence, has scattered them over the whole earth. He has sent them, unconscious and uncalled-for, even as the clouds of Heaven, to pour out the blessings with which they are fraught, and to fertilize the desert places of the earth.

The Prophet Micah speaks of them in these remarkable terms, "The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which do not wait for man or linger for mankind, [Micah 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 5.7)." It is thus that God has prepared the way for the conversion of the whole Gentile world.

The Jews, in all the different countries of the earth, possess their own Scriptures, whereon Christianity is founded; and, being conversant with the languages of the people among whom they sojourn, they will be ready to proclaim the truth the very instant that the veil is removed from their own hearts. And that this is their destined office, we are sure; for God himself says respecting them, "They will proclaim my glory among the nations. And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. [Isaiah 66:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.19-20)." They are the appointed reapers of the whole world. *Precisely as, by the Jews, God, in the apostolic age, reaped the first-fruits of the Gentiles—so will he, in due season, gather in by them the whole harvest.*

Here then we may also see,

***~~II. What we ought now to be.~~***

*We are God's Israel, as much as ever they were; and heirs of all these blessings no less than they!* For, "if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise! [Galatians 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.29)." Standing, then, in this relation to God, can we doubt our obligation to serve and honor him? Surely it befits all who "name the name of Christ,"

***~~1. To take root in him.~~***

This is expressly told us by the Apostle Paul, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving! [Colossians 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.6-7)." We are, by our very profession, "plants of righteousness, of the Lord's planting;" and it is on Christ Jesus that we stand. Into him we must shoot forth our roots; and from him must we derive all the sap and nourishment whereby we are to live, and to bring forth fruit to his glory.

Nothing is to move us from him, even for a moment; nor must we entertain a thought of finding support from any other than him. It is "in him that all fullness dwells;" and "out of his fullness must we receive" all our supplies of grace and strength! Our whole life must be one continued exercise of faith in him; and we must "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart."

***~~2. To bring forth fruit to his glory.~~***

Christians must not be like the world around them, "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord;" but abounding in the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." If you would form a perfect idea of this distinction, then go and behold two trees, one laden with leaves only, the other covered with blossoms and buds which promise an abundant supply of fruit. No person, with these objects before him, doubts of their comparative value; no one doubts which of the two better answers the end of all the cultivation bestowed upon it, or which is the more acceptable to him on whose ground they stand.

Know then, my brethren, that this is the evidence which you must give of a work of grace within you. You must, as David speaks, "be beautified with salvation;" the power of divine grace must display itself within you, by all those holy dispositions which were in Christ himself.

Behold the Savior in his whole deportment towards God and man; how meek and lowly; how patient and forbearing; how superior to earthly things, and intent on the work assigned to him! "His path was like the sun" in its course; and "such should yours be, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day!" Yes, so clearly and constantly should it shine, that all who behold you should confess that God is with you, and should glorify him for the grace conferred upon you. It is in this way that we are to approve ourselves trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, "in whom he shall be glorified."

***~~3. To extend the knowledge of him throughout the world.~~***

"None of us should live unto himself." From the moment that we are engrafted into Christ, we should begin to bring forth fruit to his glory, and should labor to diffuse to the utmost possible extent the benefits we have received. Our domestic circle should occupy our first attention; and then the neighborhood in which we live; and then we should go on further, to extend our efforts, until we have "filled the face of the whole world with fruit." This should be the ambition of every child of God; and, if facilities are afforded us for combined exertion, we should gladly avail ourselves of them, in order that our labors may be more useful, and that we may effect by union, what cannot be wrought by individual exertion.

In particular, we should look upon the state of the Jewish and Heathen world. We should lament to see in what darkness both the one and the other are lying; and, like the holy apostles, we should endeavor to advance the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world. Like Paul, we should have great heaviness and continual sorrow in our hearts for those who are "perishing for lack of knowledge;" and, by all the means within our reach, we should labor, that "all the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ."

***~~And now, let me further improve this subject,~~***

**1. In a way of reproof to ourselves.**

How little of this piety is to be seen among us! Men are "rooted" indeed; but it is in the world, and not in Christ. And there is, to a certain degree, a form of godliness among us; but its power is sadly lacking. Nor is there altogether a lack of benevolence; but it is displayed rather to the *bodies*than the *souls*of men; or, at all events, it is exercised only towards those around us, instead of being extended to the whole world. Perhaps we may contribute towards the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, and the sending of Missionaries to the Gentiles, and to the work that is carrying forward among the Jews; but, if we examine how far our *hearts*are interested in these things, we shall have reason to be ashamed before God, and to acknowledge that we are very far from having attained that holy zeal which should animate our souls. We say indeed, as our Lord has taught us, "May Your kingdom come;" but, as for our efforts for the establishment of it, our hearts are as cold and partial as if the matter were of no importance.

I beg you, brethren, to lay this matter to heart. It is not in this way that our God ought to be served, and our Redeemer's interests promoted. We should be full of zeal in this sacred cause, even of such "a zeal" as has a tendency to "consume us." Our very life ought not to be dear to us, if that by any means we may advance the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and the glory of our God!

***~~2. In a way of encouragement, as it respects the Jews.~~***

We are apt to entertain desponding thoughts, as if it were impossible that the prophecies respecting the Jews would ever be accomplished. But is their state more desperate than it was in Egypt or in Babylon? Yet were the promised deliverances given from thence. On the self-same day that had been foretold four hundred and thirty years before, were they brought out from Egypt; and precisely at the termination of the seventy years from Babylon.

What reason, then, is there to doubt of God's effectual interposition now? Has he forgotten his own word or promise? or, after so many centuries, "is his ear become heavy that he cannot hear, or is his arm shortened that he cannot save?" He has said, "I will cause" this; and be assured, that not all the power of men or devils shall prevent the execution of his purpose; nor shall one jot or tittle of his Word ever fail!" "Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

In engaging, then, in this cause, you have this consolation; that, though you should not live to see the work fully accomplished, it shall take place at the appointed time. The dispersed of Judah shall be brought back to God; and that event shall "be as life from the dead, to the whole world."

***~~#899~~***

***~~CONVERSION OF THE JEWS GRADUAL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 27:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.12-13)~~***

KJV. "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and you shall be gathered one by one, O children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the Holy Mount at Jerusalem."

NIV. "In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem!"

The *conversion of the Jews*has until of late occupied a very small portion of attention in the Christian world; and even at this moment a sad indifference towards it too generally prevails. Notwithstanding the prophecies relating to it are so clear, the subject is scarcely ever brought before a Christian audience; and notwithstanding it is inseparably connected with the conversion of the Gentile world—it is overlooked for the most part as an event in which we have no interest.

As degraded as the Jews are, God still declares, that "they are beloved of him for their fathers' sakes;" but by us, who are indebted to their fathers for all the light that we enjoy, they are neglected and despised, as though their souls were of no value. This unconcern for their welfare is even justified by us, from a mistaken notion that God will in some miraculous way effect their conversion suddenly, and without the intervention of human means. But, while the prophecy before us serves to correct that error, it encourages us to exert ourselves in their behalf, and to expect that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

In it we see,

***~~I. The mercy reserved for the Jewish people.~~***

That "they shall be gathered" from their dispersion, and "worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem," is certain; and,

***~~1. It may well be thought that this shall be literally accomplished.~~***

There are even among wise and good men some who doubt whether the Jews shall literally be restored to their own land; and therefore I would speak with diffidence respecting it; but I confess that in my opinion the declarations of God respecting it are so strong and numerous, that I would scarcely know what to believe on the authority of Scripture, if I did not believe that. I will however content myself with mentioning only two passages; which yet, I consider as clearly determining the point.

Moses, in one of his last addresses to the Jews, tells them, that if by their iniquities they should provoke God to drive them out of the land of Canaan, and to scatter them among the nations—yet he would, on their repentance, "Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers! [Deuteronomy 30:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 30.1-5)." This was never verified at their return from Babylon, since they were not brought "from the uttermost parts of Heaven," but almost exclusively from Babylon; nor did they ever afterwards become near so numerous, as they had been under David and Solomon.

The other passage to which I will call your attention is taken from the Prophet Zechariah, who wrote after their return from Babylon. Extremely particular is the prophet in stating the populousness and prosperity of the nation at the period of their final return to their own land from their present dispersion. "This is what the LORD says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there! [Zechariah 8:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.3-5)."

If it is inquired what period is there referred to, we are told, that it should be "when ten men out of all languages of the nations should take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you! [Zechariah 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 8.23)." When, I would ask, was this ever fulfilled? When were the Jews ever so high in favor with all the nations of the earth? At no past period assuredly; but they shall be at a future season, even at that season when God shall interpose to reestablish them in the land from whence they have been driven out. But, however this may be,

***~~2. It is confessed by all, that it shall be spiritually fulfilled.~~***

The Christian Church is called "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," to which all true believers are come, [Hebrews 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.22). And to it shall the Jewish people also come in due season. Scattered as they now are, and at the utmost possible distance from Christianity, the time is coming, when "the good Shepherd will seek and search them out, and bring them into his fold, and cause them to feed upon the mountains of Israel, [Ezekiel 34:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.11-14)." Then, says God, "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; and he shall feed them, and be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it! [Ezekiel 34:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.23-24)."

Let this be compared with what the Prophet Hosea says to the same effect; and no doubt can remain, either respecting whom it is spoken, or at what period it is to be accomplished, [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.5). Were we to take from the Old Testament all the passages which speak to the same purpose, we would transcribe a considerable portion of the prophetic writings. But this is unnecessary, since there is not anyone who believes the Scriptures, who does not believe that the Jews shall at a future period be converted to the faith of Christ, and acknowledge him as their Messiah. Yet we must on no account pass over the testimony of Paul, who occupies one entire chapter with this subject; assuring us, that there is yet among the Jews "a remnant according to the election of grace, [Romans 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.6);" that "they shall again be engrafted on their own olive-tree, from which for our sakes (though for their own transgressions) they have been broken off." And that as their temporary rejection from the Church of God has been the means of introducing the Gentiles into it, so shall their restoration to it is an infinitely richer blessing to the Gentiles than ever their rejection was, being to the whole Gentile world "as life from the dead! [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15); [Romans 11:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.19-20); [Romans 11:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.24)."

Regarding then the bestowment of this mercy to the Jews as certain, we proceed to state,

***~~II. The way in which it shall be given to them.~~***

This we will trace,

***~~1. In its commencement.~~***

The extent of territory originally assigned to them in God's covenant with Abraham, was that which is here specified in our text; it was from the river Euphrates to the Nile, [Genesis 15:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 15.18). But, having been driven from thence, they are compared to an olive-tree which has been stripped of all its fruit, except a few that were either hidden from the owner, or inaccessible to him, on the topmost boughs, [Isaiah 17:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 17.4-6). God, however, will send his servants to seek out this scattered fruit, and to "beat it off," or shake it off, from the tree, in order to gather it for him. The success that will attend their labors will not be great; the Jews will be gathered only, as if it were, "one by one." But to them it will be a joyful event, that they have not been left to be devoured by the birds, but have been collected for the Master's use. This is elsewhere described by the same prophet, "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done; they shall lift up their voice; they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord; they shall cry aloud from the sea, [Isaiah 24:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.13-14)." To the same effect, God speaks also by the Prophet Jeremiah, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one from a city, and two from a family (or tribe), and I will bring you to Zion, [Jeremiah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.14)."

Such will be the effects produced upon the Jews at the commencement of the efforts that shall be made for their restoration to God. As it respects the mass of the dispersed, the first converts will be only a small remnant, a gleaning after the gathering has been made; as the prophet has informed us, "Though the people of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a *remnant*only shall return, [Isaiah 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.22);" but as it respects the complete in-gathering which shall ultimately follow, they will be as the first-fruits before the harvest, and the drop before the shower.

***~~2. In its progress.~~***

In due time "the great trumpet will be blown," and the Jews that are scattered to the utmost ends of the earth shall hear it. The trumpets were, by God's command, to be blown on different occasions; and especially, for the convoking of the people to the tabernacle in the wilderness; for the regulating of their journeys towards the Promised Land, [Numbers 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 10.2); and for the proclaiming every fiftieth year the year of Jubilee, [Leviticus 25:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 25.9).

The Gospel is this trumpet, which will be "sounded out" through the whole world; and it will "come with power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, [1 Thessalonians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.5); [1 Thessalonians 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 1.8); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 2.13)," to "the outcast Israelites in the land of Egypt, and to those who are ready to perish in the land of Assyria."

Then will that be fulfilled which is spoken by the Prophet Jeremiah, "There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.'" This is what the LORD says: "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.' See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son. "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.' For the LORD will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. I will satisfy the priests with abundance, and my people will be filled with my bounty," declares the LORD! [Jeremiah 31:6-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.6-14)."

"Then shall the Lord set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people from Assyria, and from Egypt," etc., "and shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, etc; and there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt, [Isaiah 11:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.11-12); [Isaiah 11:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.15-16)." Nor shall they come alone from the places of their dispersion; for vast multitudes will accompany them, insomuch, that "Israel shall be only as a third of the whole number, whom the Lord Almighty will bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance, [Isaiah 19:23-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 19.23-25)." Thus eventually "shall all Israel be saved; for this is God's covenant with them, when he shall take away their sins, [Romans 11:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.26-27)."

**3. In its consummation.**

"They shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem;" and O what worship will then be offered in every place! the worshipers all so enlightened! (for "the light of the moon will then be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26);") and their experience of heavenly things so deep! for "the knowledge of the Lord will then cover the earth, not in extent only, but in depth also, as the waters cover the sea, [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14);" and God revealing himself so gloriously in the midst of them! (for then "the sun will be no more their light by day, neither for brightness will the moon give light unto them; but the Lord will be an everlasting light unto them, and their God their glory, [Isaiah 60:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19-21). Cite the whole, with suitable remarks.") Then will be realized (at least in its incipient state), that vision of the beloved disciple, who says, "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God, [Revelation 21:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.2-3)."

***~~See then from hence,~~***

***~~1. How groundless is the objection which so many raise against the efforts that are making for the conversion of the Jews, that they are useless.~~***

Many ask, not with grief and sorrow, but with a kind of malignant triumph: What good have you done? Your society has now been instituted several years, and what has been their success? I answer, that no person can reasonably expect to sow and reap on the same day. No other society has prospered at the first moment of its institution. Inquire of missions to the heathen; have they prospered all at once? How much less then can it be expected, that the Jews, with all their deep-rooted prejudices, should in a moment lay them all aside, and, overcoming obstacles greater than can be conceived, become at once the disciples of the despised Nazarene?

But the Christian world have conceived a notion that the Jews are to be converted all in a day. This however is a mistake. What God may do at a future period I presume not to say. I do myself conceive, that in God's appointed time, when God's servants shall "prophesy unto them," and "the great trumpet be blown" throughout the earth, there will be a resurrection of the dry bones; and they will rise "a great army! [Ezekiel 37:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.9-10)." But this is not to be expected at the first commencement of our endeavors, as you have already heard. We are not taught to expect, in the first instance, more than the *gleanings*of an olive-tree; and, if we get "one from a city, and two from a tribe," and gather them from different places, "one by one," we are to account ourselves richly recompensed fur our labors.

How many, I would ask, did our Lord Jesus Christ, and his twelve apostles, aided by seventy other disciples, convert in the four years previous to the day of Pentecost? Yet they wrought miracles in confirmation of their word. Was the smallness of their success during that period any ground for saying, that they had lost their labor, and that it would be useless to prosecute their object any further, especially since they must do it at so great a risk to themselves, and to all who should embrace their religion?

Thus then I say, that as many have been gathered as, considering the contracted scale on which the efforts have been used, and the total lack of a proper medium of access to them which until lately we have experienced, could in reason be expected. We grant that the converts have hitherto been few, and that yet for a season they may continue to be only us slender gleanings; but is this a reason why we should not search them out, and endeavor with care and labor to beat the tree? If a house with only half-a-dozen people in it should be on fire, and some were exerting themselves for their preservation, what would you think of the humanity of the person who should deride and damp their efforts, from the consideration that they could only hope to benefit a few?

Look at the text, and see the description given of the Jews; are they not "outcasts," and "ready to perish?" And is not this a sufficient reason to seek their salvation, though we should save from destruction only "one or two?"

They are called "the lost sheep of the House of Israel;" and has not our Lord taught us, that, if there is only one of a hundred gone astray, we should go after that one and seek to bring it home? Yes, has he not in this very connection told us, that "it is not the will of your Father that one of his little ones should perish! [Matthew 18:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.12-14)."

Should not we then be like-minded with God, and determine, that not one shall perish, through any lack of effort on our part to save him? Should we not all unite as one man to carry into effect the purposes of God's love towards them? Is there any hope that the few which invite our labors, shall be gathered in—if there are none to beat or shake the tree? Or can there be a general convocation of them to the Lord, if there are none to go forth and sound the trumpet in their ears? Know then, that we need instruments, active and zealous instruments, to do the Lord's work; we need financial aid also, that we may send forth missionaries to the ends of the earth, with the Gospel trumpet in their hands, and the love of God in their hearts, to make known to the Jews their Messiah, and to "bring them home as an offering to the Lord their God, [Isaiah 66:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.20)." O that God would stir us all up to seek the welfare of Israel, and make use of us to hasten forward the period of their complete redemption!

***~~2. What we all need in order to our own salvation.~~***

Let us not, in our zeal for others, forget ourselves. We are all, with the exception of a small remnant, in as bad a state as the Jews themselves. The only difference between us is, that they are ignorant of Christ, but "we *profess*to know Christ—yet in works deny him." As far as respects vital godliness, we are as far from God as they. "All we like sheep have gone astray; and, no less than they, do we need to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, [1 Peter 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.25)." It is true of us, as well as of them, that the truly pious are but a remnant. "The god of this world" has the harvest; and the God of Heaven nothing but "the gleanings." The Lord's people are but "a little flock;" and in comparison with the multitudes who go in "the broad road that leads to destruction," they are but "few" who "enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow path."

Forgive me, then, if with holy violence I endeavor to "beat you off" from the tree on which you are yet standing, and to "gather you" for the Lord. Let me sound in your ears the Gospel trumpet, which proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;" and let me entreat you to "return (as the remnant will assuredly do) to the living God! [Isaiah 10:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.21)," "to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

We must be content, we fear, to "gather you one by one;" for, notwithstanding all the efforts that are made for the restoration of your souls to God—it is a melancholy fact that we succeed but little better with you in the midst of all your advantages, than we do with the Jews in the midst of all their disadvantages. If we labor ever so much, and can reach only "two or three upon the topmost bough, and four or five upon the outermost bough," we are forced to be content, yes, and to think ourselves well repaid; *so little power has the Gospel in the present day, and so sparingly is the Spirit of God poured out upon us.*

Know this however for your good: Whatever is necessary for the Jews, is necessary for us also. Must they believe in Christ? So must we. Must they give themselves up to him? So must we. Must they walk in his steps, and be conformed to his image? So must we. And sure I am, that the more we experience these blessings in our own souls, the more shall we labor to communicate them to the whole world, and more especially to those for whose sake God has imparted to us the superior blessings we enjoy! [Romans 11:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.30-31).

***~~#900~~***

***~~THE FELICITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 28:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.5)~~***

"In that day shall the Lord Almighty be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the remnant of his people!"

*The sublime expressions of Scripture frequently raise in our minds a pleasing sensation, while yet we entertain but very confused notions of the truths contained in them.*

It is scarcely possible to read the words of the text without being struck with wonder and admiration; but we cannot enter into their full import without a careful attention to the preceding context.

Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes; it was situated on a high hill, and surrounded by fertile valleys, which were skirted with other hills; hence it was compared to a crown or chaplet; which, while it adorned the adjacent country, marked its pre-eminence above all the other cities of Israel. But for the pride and intemperance of its inhabitants, God denounced his judgments against it, declaring that this beautiful chaplet should be "a fading flower," and this boasted fortress, a desolation. He foretold that its wealth and beauty should but excite the avidity of its enemies, who, as soon as they came against it, would prevail over it, and greedily devour it, as one would devour a delicious piece of fruit which he unexpectedly found hanging on a tree. Then, to mark as strongly as possible, the contrast between them and his faithful people, he promises that he himself will be to his people a crown of glory that shall never perish, and a diadem of beauty that shall never fade!

This was fulfilled in the preservation of the two tribes under Hezekiah from the forces of the Assyrians, after they had destroyed Samaria and carried captive the whole kingdom of Israel. But its full accomplishment must be sought for in the blessings which God grants to his people under the Gospel dispensation. To illustrate it, we must observe, that,

**I. In the most degenerate times God has a remnant of faithful people.**

***~~There has been no season when God has not had some faithful adherents.~~***

In the *antediluvian world*all flesh had corrupted their way, and it seemed as if the very remembrance of God had been effaced from the minds of his creatures; but yet there was one small family who maintained their steadfastness, and openly acknowledged the true God.

Before God separated the *Israelites*for himself, the world was again reduced to a state similar to that before the deluge; yet even then there were found an Abraham, a Melchizedek, a Job, and perhaps a few others connected with them.

The times of *Elijah*were extremely degenerate; yet then, though he thought himself the only servant of God in Israel, there were seven thousand others that had never bowed their knee to Baal.

Though therefore the knowledge of God has frequently been almost extinct—yet there never has been a period when he had not some to be his witnesses in the ages in which they lived.

***~~But at no time has God had more than a little remnant.~~***

When first the twelve tribes were established in Canaan, piety prevailed among that nation more than at any other period; but there is no reason to imagine that the godly bore any proportion to the ungodly; nor, if their whole nation had been pious, did they bear any proportion to the world at large. There were many converted in the days of the Apostles; and religion flourished far beyond what it ever did before or since that time; yet Christians were even then "like the gleanings of the olive tree—one or two upon the topmost boughs."

The name of Christ is indeed very widely spread; but if his professed followers be sifted, how little true wheat would be found in comparison with the chaff! Truly it is "a little flock," "a remnant according to the election of grace;" "though the nominal Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is only a small remnant that will eventually be saved, [Romans 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.5); [Romans 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.27)."

Their state however is peculiarly happy, for,

***~~II. While they honor God—God greatly exalts and blesses them.~~***

The terms used in the text import that:

***~~1. God will be to his people a source of Honor.~~***

A crown is the highest honor to which a human being can aspire in this world. But how poor and contemptible is such a dignity, when compared with that which God confers on his people! "He is not ashamed to be called their God!" He acknowledges them as "his sons and daughters!" They are the very "members of Christ's body"—yes, they "are one spirit" together with him. While monarchs are surrounded by their nobles, the saints are attended by holy angels, who, as "ministering spirits, are sent from Heaven to minister unto them." When they go hence they have a *crown of righteousness*, and a *throne of glory*on which they shall sit with Christ at the right hand of God, in whose presence they shall "reign as kings and priests forever and ever!" "Such honor have all his saints."

***~~2. God will be to his people a source of Beauty.~~***

A crown is deemed the brightest ornament to the person that wears it; nor is anything lacking to it that can increase its splendor. This idea is particularly marked in that a crown is called "a diadem of beauty."

But God puts a far brighter ornament around the head of his people, "He beautifies them with salvation." He encircles them, as he did Moses of old, with rays of his own glory, insomuch that "his own glory is seen upon them." A meek and quiet spirit is but a single grace out of many with which they are endued; yet that is "an ornament of great value even in the sight of God" himself; what then must be the constellation of graces that form their character?

But what can God himself say more than this, that they are "renewed after his own image in righteousness and true holiness," and that they are progressively "changed into his image from glory to glory by the agency of his almighty Spirit!" Is the ornament of a glittering bauble worthy to be compared with this?

***~~3. God will be to his people a source of Happiness.~~***

Men conceive that the possession of imperial honors must of necessity contribute greatly to their happiness; hence, if such a station be within their reach, there is nothing which men will not do to attain it. But supposing that all the satisfaction which men expect from their elevation were invariably attached to it, how much greater happiness does God impart to his chosen people!

Their "*peace*passes all understanding;"  
their "*hope*is full of immortality;"  
their "*joy*is unspeakable and full of glory."

They are not indeed exempt from sorrows; but they have "joys with which the stranger intermeddles not." No tongue can declare the comfort they sometimes feel in a sense of the divine favor; nor can the heart of man conceive those joys which are prepared for them at the right hand of God.

***~~4. God will be to his people a source of Security.~~***

The idea of security attaches to the condition of a king, because, the instant that he is in danger, there are thousands at his command to rally round the throne, and to expose their lives in his defense. But if "the Lord Almighty himself is our crown," then are we secure indeed. And has he not said that "He stands round about his people;" that "their place of defense is the munition of rocks! [Isaiah 33:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.16);" that "He himself will be to them as a broad and rapid river that can neither be passed nor navigated, [Isaiah 33:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.21);" yes, that "He will be a wall of fire round about them, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5)," not only to protect their persons, but to destroy all that would invade their peace? Has he not assured us that "neither the power nor the policy of Hell shall ever prevail against them!" and that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hand!" Having HIM, they have all. If "none can separate them from his love," their honor and beauty, their happiness mid security, are as firm and immovable as God himself!

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. How desirable is it to be found among God's little remnant!~~***

Look at the greatest monarch upon earth; and the condition of Lazarus is infinitely preferable to his, unless he is among the number of God's people. Created glory, like that of Samaria, is but "a fading flower;" but if we belong to God, we have a portion, substantial in its nature, and everlasting in its duration! Let us then seek this portion with all earnestness through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

***~~2. How little should we regard the scoffs and contempt of men!~~***

It is indeed "a small matter to be judged by man's judgment." If God commends us as wise, we need not be concerned though men should account us fools. Time will show who are the truly wise: they who through the love of the world or the fear of man displease their God, or they, who face the frowns of the world, and sacrifice its interests in order that they may please him. Indeed the ungodly themselves will soon alter their opinions respecting these things.

If a king upon his throne would not regard the ravings of a maniac who would imagine himself to be arrayed in royal majesty—so neither need we regard those who enjoy only the appearance of happiness, while we possess God himself for our crown of glory, and our diadem of beauty!

***~~3. We are bound in our respective spheres, to honor and glorify our God!~~***

Can we reflect a moment on such transcendent mercies, and not feel it our duty to walk worthy of them? If any ask: How shall I requite the Lord? We answer, "Be a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hand, [Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.3)." It is true, we cannot add to his honor, beauty, happiness, or security; but, as a diadem is that on which the prince looks with peculiar delight—so may we be objects of pleasure and delight in the hand of our God. Let us then endeavor so to *walk*that we may be his boast; so to *shine*, that it may be seen to whom we belong; and so to *honor*him, that he may acknowledge us as his in the day that he shall make up his jewels.

***~~#901~~***

***~~THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD FAST APPROACHING~~***

***~~[Isaiah 29:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.17)~~***

"Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?"

Our blessed Lord reproved the Scribes and Pharisees of his day; because when, from particular appearances in the atmosphere, they could judge with considerable accuracy what the state of the weather would be—they could not discern, from the clear evidences before them, that their Messiah was indeed come, [Matthew 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.28) with 16:2, 3.

We will not say that a similar reproof is due to those who see not the near approach of the Millennium now, because the evidences of it are by no means so clear and strong; but I think there is abundant ground for the appeal which the Prophet Isaiah made to the people of his day, "Is it not yet a very little while," and all the wonderful blessings of the latter day shall overspread the earth?

In confirmation of this sentiment, I will set before you:

***~~I. The event anticipated.~~***

***~~The prediction in my text relates to one great event.~~***

It is generally supposed to comprehend two events; namely, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the rejection of God's ancient people. But I feel no doubt but that it relates generally to the conversion of the whole world to Christ; and that its true sense is this, "In a little time the uncultivated forest of the Gentile world shall become a fruitful field; and that which would now be reckoned a fruitful field, namely, the Jewish Church, shall be esteemed as a forest," so incomparably more abundant shall its fruitfulness be in the latter day.

This accords best with the very words of my text; for it is not said that the fruitful field shall be turned into a forest, (as in the former clause,) but that it "shall be esteemed as a forest;" where the diversity of the words clearly marks the diversity of the sentiment contained in them.

This also well accords with the general strain of prophecy, which abounds in amplification, and, if I may so say, exaggeration. Thus this same prophet, speaking of this same period, says, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind …. . There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days; for the child shall die when a hundred years old; but the sinner, being a hundred years old shall be accursed," that is, shall be considered as having died under a kind of judicial sentence, by reason of his being removed at so early an age! [Isaiah 65:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.17); [Isaiah 65:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.20).

This, too, is most clearly marked in the context, "In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel! [Isaiah 29:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.18-19)." It is also strongly marked in the context in a following chapter; where the very same words are used, by the same prophet, "Till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest, [Isaiah 32:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15-18). And again the very same event, foretold, though not in the same—yet in nearly similar terms, is associated with the very same identical facts, expressive of the blessings which shall then abound over the face of the whole earth, [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2); [Isaiah 35:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.5-7).

In a word: what the prophet here speaks respecting the state of the Church in his day, as compared with that which shall prevail in the latter day, is precisely to the same effect with that which Paul speaks respecting the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, "The former had a glory; but the latter far exceeded in glory; so that that which was made glorious had no glory, by reason of the glory that excelled, [2 Corinthians 3:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.8-10)."

***~~And a most glorious event will this be.~~***

The whole world, which is like a desolate wilderness, will have the seed of the Gospel cast upon it, and, through the showers of divine grace falling upon it in rich abundance, will bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of our God. We doubt not but that the most savage people upon the face of the earth, who, in point of civilization and knowledge, are at present scarcely superior to the beasts, will, through the preaching of the Gospel, "be turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God!"

And where the light of the Gospel has already come, it will shine with incomparably greater splendor; according as it is written, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)." In that day, the prophet tells us, "the people shall be all righteous, [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21);" "holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the very bells of the horses, [Zechariah 14:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.20)," that are used in agricultural pursuits; and "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ! [Revelation 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15)."

The appeal made to us respecting this blessed period leads me to show,

***~~II. The evidence we have of its near approach.~~***

**The prophet judged it near in his day.**

So certain and so clear were the views which the prophets had of the events which they were inspired to foretell, that they saw them already accomplished, as it were, before their eyes. "A thousand years were with them but as one day, [2 Peter 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.8)." It is now two thousand six and hundred years since these events were revealed to the prophet, and yet Jehovah spoke of them as if they were already taking place, "Lift up your eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall surely clothe yourself with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does. Then shall you say in your heart, Who has begotten these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? [Isaiah 49:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.18); [Isaiah 49:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.21)."

So again, "Who are these, that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)." Now then, if the prophet spoke of this period as so near in his day,

***~~Much more may we consider it as very near at this time.~~***

And indeed, besides the lapse of so many centuries, we have much additional evidence of its approach. The general scope of prophecy, so far as it designates the period of which our text speaks, points, if I may so say, to this very age in which we live. The one thousand two hundred and sixty years of Daniel are, beyond all doubt, near to their completion; and consequently the reign of Christ on earth, as its universal Monarch, is near to its commencement.

Besides, among both Jews and Gentiles there is a general expectation that some great change is at hand, and that God will shortly interpose to bring all nations to such a unity in religious faith and practice as has never yet been seen upon earth.

The efforts which are making throughout the whole Christian world for the accomplishment of this object, by translating the Holy Scriptures into the different languages of the earth, by sending out missionaries also to instruct both Jews and Gentiles, and by instilling into the rising generation the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These efforts are altogether unprecedented, both in respect of energy and extent; and, while they show that God is with his people to call forth their exertions, they are a pledge to them that their labors shall not be in vain.

The actual commencement of a work of grace in many places, where nothing but darkness reigned until of late, justifies a hope that we already see the dawn of approaching day, and experience somewhat of the drops that precede the shower. The state of the Turkish Empire (Dec. 6, 1827), and of Popery, were further touched upon, as possibly leading to great results in reference both to the Mohammedan and Popish delusions; the destruction of which is to precede the glory of the Latter Day.

**APPLICATION.**

***~~1. Let us look forward with holy earnestness to this blessed time.~~***

Did Abraham feel such delight in the prospect of our Savior's first coming? And shall not we, with similar emotions, look forward to the period when he shall come in his glory, and establish his kingdom over the face of the whole earth? Even in Heaven is this a ground of joy, [Revelation 12:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.10-12); and much more should it be to us, who hope, "in a very little while," to participate in all the blessings which he is coming to bestow.

***~~2. Let us pray to God to hasten this long wished-for day.~~***

We are taught to pray, "May Your kingdom come." And it is in answer to prayer that "God will pour out his Spirit from on high, to effect that change which is promised in our text. It is by the Holy Spirit alone that this change can be wrought, [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15); and through his almighty power shall Pentecostal conversions be effected, in every quarter of the globe.

***~~3. Let every one of us, in our place, endeavor to help it forward.~~***

God has promised that "seed time and harvest shall never cease," until the end of the world; but it is by the instrumentality of man that he effects his purposes; so also shall the diffusion of divine knowledge, and the increase of fertility throughout the whole earth, be effected by the instrumentality of man, [Matthew 9:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.38).

But it is not by ministers only that God will pour out these benefits upon us, but by the agency of all who, in their place and station, endeavor to advance his cause in the world. Even in the Apostle's days, females had their department of labor, and labored too with good success, as well as men, [Romans 16:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.3-4); [Romans 16:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.12). And at this time, also, there is a call for the exertions of every soul among us; and though we have in ourselves no more power or efficiency than rams' horns—yet will God by us demolish the strong holds of sin and Satan, and establish throughout the world the kingdom of his dear Son!

***~~#902~~***

***~~THE GOSPEL A SOURCE OF BLESSINGS TO MANKIND~~***

***~~[Isaiah 29:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 29.18-19)~~***

KJV. "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness; the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

NIV. "In that day the *deaf*will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the *blind*will see. Once more the *humble*will rejoice in the LORD; the *needy*will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

There is a day frequently spoken of in Scripture under the emphatical title of "that day;" and it sometimes refers to the apostolic age, sometimes to the millennial period, and sometimes to the day of judgment.

Commentators in general consider the first of these to be the time designated by that expression in the text. To this they are led by the interpretation of the preceding verse; which they understand thus, "In a very little while, Lebanon (the Gentile world, which has hitherto been a mere desert) shall be turned into a fruitful field (by means of the Gospel which shall be published); and the (hitherto) fruitful field (of the Jewish Church) shall be esteemed as a forest (or desert). And in that day (of the destruction of the Jewish Church and polity) shall the deaf hear the words of the book," etc. etc.

But I would rather incline to consider the second period, namely, the millennial, as the time intended; because I have no conception of "Lebanon," which is constantly used in Scripture to characterize grandeur and fertility, being applied to designate a mere desert. I apprehend rather that in that verse there is a climax, descriptive of the state of the Church when the Jews shall be gathered into it; that then "Lebanon (which now is desolate) shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field (such as it will then exist) shall be esteemed as a forest;" seeing that "the handful of corn cast upon the top of the mountains" will spring up so abundantly, that "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16)." This is the kind of climax which often occurs in relation to that very period. It may be seen in chapter 45:20, where it is said, in reference to the protracted age to which men will then live, that "a person dying at the age of a hundred years will die a mere child, and be accounted as one accursed," that is, cut off prematurely, under a stroke of judicial vengeance.

In chapter 32:15, also, the very expressions of the text are again used in this precise view, "When the Spirit shall be poured from on high, (it is said,) the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Thus I understand the prophet as saying in our text, that "in a very little while" (it was but a little while even in Isaiah's days, but now it is just at hand,) the Jews shall be converted to the faith of Christ, in such numbers as to be like the woods of Lebanon; and *then*the poor benighted Gentiles also shall be gathered into the fold of Christ, in a way and to an extent altogether unprecedented from the first publication of Christianity to that very hour.

In this view of the passage it has an equally favorable aspect both upon Jews and Gentiles. On Jews, to show what blessings are in reserve for them, (and now just about to be poured out upon them.) And on Gentiles, who will by their means experience, as it were, throughout the whole world, "a resurrection from the dead, [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15)."

It is not however my intention to insist on this point; but, waving any further notice of the millennial period, I shall simply show,

***~~I. What is that book to which the attention of all men shall be called?~~***

It is here called "the book;" and must undoubtedly be the book of Scripture, in which all "the visions" of the seers, and the predictions of the prophets, are contained. This is the book in relation to which God had poured out upon the Jewish nation a spirit of deep sleep, and had closed their eyes, even the eyes of their prophets, their rulers, and their seers; insomuch that it was altogether as "a sealed book," which, "whether delivered to a learned or unlearned man," was equally unintelligible to him, verses 10-12. So completely were its contents hidden from them, that "the wisdom of their wise men perished, and the understanding of their prudent men was hidden! verse 14."

From the New Testament we are able to speak more definitely on this point, and to say that *this book is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*; for this is the description which Paul gives of the Gospel, in reference to the very chapter before us. He says that he was sent to preach the Gospel; but that it was to the great mass of his hearers "foolishness;" agreeable to what had been written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." "To the Jews," he tells us, "it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who were *called*, whether Jews or Greeks, it was Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, [1 Corinthians 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.18-19); [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23-24)."

This book contains the "hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory! [1 Corinthians 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.7-8)." Indeed "the natural man, whoever he is, cannot receive it; for it is foolishness unto him; neither can he know it, because it is spiritually discerned," and can be known only through the influence of God's Spirit upon the soul, [1 Corinthians 2:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10-14).

Thus, by comparing the account given of this book by an inspired Apostle, in reference to the very chapter before us, we may with certainty declare what book is here intended.

Now, as the Gospel is the book which the deaf are to hear, and the blind to see, it will be proper,

***~~1. To enter a little into the contents of the gospel.~~***

It reveals to sinful man a Savior. It declares that God, in tender mercy to our fallen race, sent his only dear Son into the world, to make an atonement for us, and to effect by his own obedience unto death, our reconciliation with him. The Old Testament revealed this as to be effected in due season; and the New Testament gives an account of it as already accomplished. The New Testament moreover sets before us all his invitations and promises, together with the promise of the Holy Spirit, to render the whole effectual for our complete and final salvation.

**2. To show briefly, that** **the gospel is indeed God's destined instrument for the salvation of the world.**

It is that with which he wrought from the very beginning; for, though it was comparatively but obscurely revealed—yet it was to this that *Adam*looked, as holding forth a promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head; and to this the faith of *Abel*had respect, when he presented the offering of a firstling to the Lord. To this also *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and all the *patriarchs*, and all the *prophets*, and all the saints and *martyrs*of the ancient Church, had respect. They viewed it through the medium of types and prophecies; and though they had not actually received the promised Savior, they were saved by him, just as we are who live so many centuries posterior to his coming, [Hebrews 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.4); [Hebrews 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.13); [Hebrews 11:39-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.39-40). There never was, nor ever shall be, "any other foundation" for a sinner's hope, or "any other name whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ."

Having shown what "the book" is, we are led to notice,

***~~II. Its transcendent excellency.~~***

The gospel comes to the whole world, and commends itself to all.

***~~1. The gospel is suited to their needs.~~***

It might be thought, that, whatever offers it made, it would be of no use, if men had not eyes to see it, or ears to hear it; but it engages that the deaf shall hear it, and that the blind shall see it out of obscurity and out of darkness. It not only presents to us things suited to our spiritual senses, but it gives us the very senses, whereby we are enabled to apprehend them. Now this is of peculiar importance; for there is no man by nature who has any spiritual discernment whatever; all are both deaf and blind; and, if any imagine that they are exempt from the general malady, they only prove the more strongly the universality of this truth.

Under these two figures may be comprehended all the necessities of our fallen nature; for as a person who has from his birth been destitute of sight and hearing can possess no intellectual attainments, so those who are by nature cut off from all means of spiritual discernment must be destitute of spiritual good. Yet there is no spiritual good which the Gospel will not impart to those who seek it, because it will give both the *blessing*itself, and the *faculty*whereby it is to be enjoyed.

It were well if this matter were more generally considered; for it would cut off many sources of despondency, by which the people of God are discouraged. Nothing is more common than to consider a lack of natural talent as an almost insurmountable obstacle to the attainment of divine knowledge; and more especially to regard long-contracted guilt as a ground for apprehending an utter exclusion from the hopes of the Gospel. But the Gospel meets the ignorant and the guilty with the same free offers of mercy as are presented to the possessors of learning and morality; and it takes occasion from their very discouragements to press on them in particular the acceptance of its benefits, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst (a more desperate case can scarcely be painted); I the Lord will hear them; and will open for them rivers of waters in high places (the very reverse of what might naturally be expected), and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water, [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18)." Whatever then are any man's necessities, let him turn the greatness of those necessities into a plea, as David did, "Be merciful unto my sin, O God, for it is *great!*" and let him know, that the greater his necessities are, the more will God glorify himself in the supply of them.

***~~2. The gospel is sufficient for their necessities.~~***

Nothing is lacking to make the Gospel of Christ effectual. Human wisdom can add nothing to the teaching of God's Spirit. Man's righteousness can add nothing to the righteousness of Christ; nor can his strength add anything to the strength communicated from on high. On the contrary, the least reliance on anything human will invalidate everything that is divine; for God will do all, and have all the glory, or leave man to his own inadequate and unassisted efforts. Of itself, it is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" and "mighty through God to the pulling down all the strongholds" of sin and Satan. If only it comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, nothing can stand before it. It has already prevailed to a vast extent over the powers of darkness, and in God's good time it shall "subdue all nations to the obedience of faith."

One effect in particular it invariably produces, wherever it is received in spirit and in truth; it imparts "a joy with which a stranger to it cannot fathom." "The meek are they who will receive it; and they will increase their joy in the Lord; and the poor among men, for whose advancement it is preeminently designed, shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." Others may possess carnal joy; but these shall have a joy in the Lord, "a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

**APPLICATION.**

Why should not "that day" be already come? Whether it is come or not to Jews or Gentiles, there is no reason why it should not be come to *you*. How blessed would it be to see the commencement of that day among you! See what is said of it in another part of Isaiah's prophecies, "Then the eyes of the *blind*shall be opened, and the ears of the *deaf*shall be unstopped; then shall the *lame*man leap as an deer, and the tongue of the *mute*sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert! [Isaiah 35:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.5-6)." Dear brethren, implore help from God; and he will come now at last to give efficacy to his Word, and to make it the power of God to the salvation of your souls.

***~~#903~~***

***~~CONFIDENCE IN GOD RECOMMENDED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 30:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.7)~~***

"Therefore have I cried concerning this: Their strength is to sit still."

*Nothing is more strongly inculcated in the Holy Scriptures than trust in God.*Nothing more dishonors him than the lack of it; nothing more glorifies him than its unreserved exercise. Not that it supersedes the necessity of exertion on our part; for we are to "work out our own salvation," notwithstanding we know that all our will and power to do so must proceed from God, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13). Yet there are occasions whereon we must forbear to act, and simply wait on God to effect for us what we have no hope of effecting for ourselves.

Such was the occasion before us. The Assyrian monarch was about to invade Judea; and the whole Jewish people were for delivering themselves from his power. This was most displeasing to God, who sent his prophet to inform them, that "the Egyptians should help in vain, and to no purpose. Therefore have I cried," says he, "concerning this; Their strength is to sit still."

The prophet, you will see, limits his assertion to that particular occasion; so that the passage requires me to show:

***~~I. Under what circumstances activity is called for.~~***

Certainly we are, in the general, to be "workers together with God," more especially:

***~~1. When we have to earn our temporal support.~~***

Immediately after the Fall, God imposed upon us a necessity to labor for our daily subsistence; saying, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, [Genesis 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.19)." He also determined what portion of our time should be given to it, "Six days shah you labor, [Exodus 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 20.9)." In the Gospel he has renewed his injunctions, in the plainest terms, "Labor with your hands for the thing that is good, [Ephesians 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.28)." And, "If any man will not labor neither shall he eat! [2 Thessalonians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.10)."

Even in subordinating our temporal engagements to those which are spiritual, he has shown that the temporal are not to be neglected. The command, "Seek first the kingdom of God, [Matthew 6:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 6.33)," implies, that the things of time and sense are to occupy an important measure of our time. And, indeed, on our exertions, our temporal prosperity is made to depend; for it is "the diligent hand, and that only, that makes rich! [Proverbs 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 10.4)."

***~~2. When any good works are to be done.~~***

In reference to them, a state of inactivity would be highly criminal. Our blessed Lord "went about doing good, [Acts 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.3);" and he expects that all his people should follow him in this respect; for "he has set an example for us, that we should follow his steps, 1 Peter 2:21." Indeed, our conformity to him in this respect will constitute a very principal subject of his inquiry at the last day, and a sure ground of his decision in the day of judgment, [Matthew 25:34-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.34-46). We are therefore instructed, expressly, "not to be weary in well-doing, [Galatians 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.9)," but, "by patient continuance in it, to seek for glory and honor and immortality, [Romans 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.7)." We must therefore abound in every good work, [2 Thessalonians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.17);" and, "whatever our hand finds to do, we must do it with all our might, [Ecclesiastes 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.10)."

***~~3. When the salvation of the soul is concerned.~~***

*That salvation is the gift of God, is no reason why we should neglect to seek it.* On the contrary, our Lord says, "Labor for the food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, [John 6:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.27)." *All the images which are used to represent the Christian life imply great exertion on our part*. We are to "run a race;" to "fight a good fight;" to "strive for the mastery;" but these things are not done without great exertion; so that, if in the hope and prospect of the heavenly prize, we were to sit still, we would insure to ourselves nothing but shame and loss.

No *election*of God will ever save us, if we do not labor to save ourselves, "We must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure;" and must "add one virtue to another," without any partiality or reserve, if ever we would "have an entrance ministered unto us into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! [2 Peter 1:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.5-11)."

Still, however, there are occasions where it is proper to forbear working, and where "our strength is rather to sit still;" in confirmation of which, I will show when activity may be suspended, and,

***~~II. Under what circumstances activity is to give way to confidence in God.~~***

***~~1. We may "sit still," when, from the nature of the circumstances, activity can be of no avail.~~***

When God commanded the paschal lamb to be slain, and all the Hebrews to sprinkle their houses with its blood, as the means of averting from them the sword of the destroying angel—to what purpose would they have put forth any efforts of their own? Could they ward off the stroke which inflicted death on all the first-born of Egypt? No! "their strength was to sit still;" and to confide in God, who had promised to deliver them.

Again; When the Red Sea was before them, and mountains and morasses were on either side, and the hosts of Egypt in their rear, what could they do to ward off the destruction that threatened them? They were as incapable of resisting Pharaoh, as if they had been already bound in chains before him. Their only hope was in God, who opened a way for them through the sea; and made that, which was a path to them, a grave to all their foes.

Now the same line of conduct befits *us*also, in reference to the redemption of our souls. God says to us, "Christ, your Passover is sacrificed for you! [1 Corinthians 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 5.7)." Sprinkle yourselves with his blood; rely on that for protection; and, though the curses of my law are following you, and all the powers of darkness are combined against you for your destruction, "yet shall you not perish, but have everlasting life! [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16)." If we will comply with this, our salvation is sure; but if we will have recourse to any efforts of our own, then our doom is sealed; for *we may as well hope, by our own power, to create a world, as by any works of ours to remove our guilt, and to obtain for ourselves the felicity of Heaven*.

"We must be saved by faith, and not by works, [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9)." Any attempts to save ourselves by works will only invalidate what Christ has done for us, [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4). Every endeavor, therefore, of this kind must forever be relinquished; our whole strength, in relation to this matter, is only to "sit still."

***~~2. We may "sit still," when no means can be used, but such as are unlawful.~~***

To *Rebekah*it had been promised, while her twin children, Esau and Jacob, were yet in her womb, that the "elder should serve the younger, [Genesis 25:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 25.23)." But when Isaac, to all appearance, was dying, he called for Esau, in order to confer on him the honors and privileges of his birth-right. Rebekah, who had a partiality for her younger son Jacob, seeing this, and fearing that he would lose the honors which God had promised him, and having no prospect of turning Isaac from his purpose by any representations or remonstrances of hers, proposed and executed a most iniquitous device; by which she brought on herself and family a long series of afflictive dispensations! [Genesis 27:1-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 27.1-46). She should on no account have interposed to effect her wishes in such a way as this; but have placed her confidence in God, who was at no loss for means to accomplish his own decrees.

Means were proposed to *Daniel*and the *Hebrew Youths*to avert the calamities with which they were threatened; but they acted as befit them, and experienced from God the aid for which they relied upon him, [Daniel 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 3.6).

And thus it befits *us*also, when threatened by our enemies, to "cast our care on God [1 Peter 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.7)." We are not, because of any conspiracies against us, to cry with desponding apprehension, "A confederacy, a confederacy! But to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and to make him our fear, and him only our dread! [Isaiah 8:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.12-13)." We are never to betake ourselves to dissimulation, or any unworthy methods of deliverance; but to wait the Lord's leisure, and assure ourselves that "in the mount of difficulty he will be seen, [Genesis 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.14)." The direction to all the Lord's people is, "He who believes, shall not make haste! [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16)."

**3.** **We may "sit still," when personal exertion will take the matter out of God's hands.**

We admire the conduct of *David*, who, in his conflict with Goliath, would take nothing with him but a sling and a stone. Here, not in word only, but in deed also, he showed where his trust was, even in God, who had assured him of the victory, [1 Samuel 17:39-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 17.39-47).

On the other hand, *King Asa*, though on the whole a pious monarch, brought on himself the displeasure of the Most High, because "in a time of sickness he sought to the physicians rather than to his God, [2 Chronicles 16:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 16.12)." He was not to blame for applying to the physicians, as God's instruments for his relief; his fault was, in relying on their skill, rather than on God's power and grace.

It is not every use of menus that violates the rule that is here prescribed; they may be used, if they are used simply as means; but *our trust must be as entirely on God as if no means whatever were employed*.

The *Apostles*were directed, when brought before kings and governors for the Gospel sake, to "take no thought what they should say, in defense of themselves, or of the Gospel which they preached; they were told, that, in the precise time of need, they should be instructed by God what they should speak, [Matthew 10:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.19-20)." That was necessary, in order to show that they spoke not of their own minds, but by inspiration of God.

But if *ministers*, in their stated services, without any such call from God, were to neglect to prepare for their public addresses, they would only tempt the Lord; who authorizes none to "offer to Him that which costs them nothing." *After all our preparation, our reliance must be on Him, "who alone can give the increase*, even though Paul should plant, and Apollos water."

The true distinction is, that "in the spirit of our minds" we are to sit still, whether we use any means or not; and, when God's agency will be more seen and known and acknowledged, and his glory be thereby the more advanced—then we are to forbear the use of means altogether, or only use them as the prophet did the lump of figs, to heal in Hezekiah a fatal disorder, [2 Kings 20:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.7).

***~~Let me now add,~~***

**1. A word of caution.**

Doubtless this doctrine is open to abuse. In truth, there are many, who, when urged to seek after God for the salvation of their souls, will say, 'I have no fear; I trust in God.' But it is a desperate delusion to say, 'I trust in God,' when they do not use the means which God himself has appointed for the attainment of the end.

What would these people themselves think of a man who should say, 'I trust in God for a harvest,' while he neglected to plough and sow his field? Yet this man would act as rationally as they, [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.7-8). Be it so, that all depends on the election of God; but, if we are "elect of God the Father, it is through sanctification of the Spirit, and through sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)." The means are ordained, as well as the end; yes, the end is ordained by and through the means; and if we will not go to Christ to "sprinkle our consciences with his blood," or apply to the "Holy Spirit to sanctify" our souls, we shall in vain hope to attain the end. I warn you therefore, brethren, not to "pervert the Scriptures to your destruction, [2 Peter 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.16)," but to seek that conformity to them, in all things, which God requires.

***~~2. A word of encouragement.~~***

To you at this day, no less than to his people of old, does God say, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness und confidence shall be your strength, verse 15." And is not this sufficient for you? Whom did God ever forsake? Who that ever trusted in him was confounded? Is he not the same God now as ever he was? "Is his arm shortened, that he cannot save? Or is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear?"

The tempest-tossed disciples were rebuked for entertaining a fear, when Jesus was embarked with them, [Matthew 8:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.24-26), though they had no specific promise in relation to that particular storm. But you have promises which relate to every danger to which a human being can be exposed. "Know then in whom you have believed, that He is able to save that which you have committed to him, [2 Timothy 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.12);" and, under the darkest circumstances that can ever be imagined, "be strong in faith, giving glory to your God! [Romans 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.20)."

***~~#904~~***

***~~BENEFITS ARISING FROM GOD'S RETURN TO THE SOUL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)~~***

"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound."

***~~The dispensations of Providence, if rightly improved, are calculated to promote our spiritual welfare.~~***

The Jews derived many instructive lessons from the dealings of God with them in Egypt and the wilderness. But God here promises them more abundant knowledge and joy by means of their deliverance from the Assyrian host. That this is the literal import of the passage appears from verse 31 compared with verse 25, 26.

The grandeur, however, of the words before us evidently shows that the prophet had respect to more distant times, and to blessings which no temporal deliverance was able to convey.

***~~I. This promise is verified among us at this day.~~***

***~~1. This promise is fulfilled to us, at the first reconciliation of our souls to God.~~***

The convictions of an awakened conscience are as deep wounds to the soul. *Sin, though it is honey in the mouth, becomes bitter in the belly!* Peter, Judas, and David in particular, show what "wounds" it will make in the soul, [Psalm 32:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.1-6); nor can anyone view it aright, without having his heart broken with a sense of its malignity.

But reconciliation with God heals these wounds. The blood of Christ is that "balm of Gilead," which never was applied in vain, [Jeremiah 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 8.22). It operates as the sight of the bronze serpent on the dying Israelites, to restore to life and vigor those whose state seems altogether desperate, [John 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.14-15). David, after the foulest transgressions, declared his persuasion of its efficacy to cleanse even him, [Psalm 51:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.7-8). And all who are reconciled to God through Christ experience its full effects, [Luke 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.18). [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8).

Now this is a season wherein the knowledge and joy of the soul are much enlarged. Until this great event is accomplished, the views of the soul are very contracted; nor is it acquainted with any joy but what is carnal. *But no sooner has reconciliation with God taken place, than the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines into the heart, and all his perfections are admired and adored.* Now also the excellency of the Gospel salvation is discovered; and the reasonableness of a life devoted to God is deeply felt. Now is a new and inexhaustible source of happiness opened to the soul; and its peace and joy flow down like a river; and all the pleasures that it ever enjoyed in the ways of sin, are no more in comparison with its present consolations, than the faint "light of the moon" to the invigorating rays of the meridian "sun."

***~~2. This promise is fulfilled to us, at any return of God to the soul after a season of darkness and desertion.~~***

God finds it necessary sometimes to hide his face from his people, and thus to wound their souls afresh. How the loss of God's presence afflicts a pious soul, may be seen in the lamentations and complaints which the most eminent saints have uttered on such occasions. Job tells us that God's arrows stuck fast in him, and that the poison of them drank up his spirit! [Job 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 6.4). And David even "roared for the disquietness of his heart." Nor are there lacking at this day, many whose experience accords with the description which that eminent saint has given of his, [Psalm 42:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.3-4); [Psalm 42:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.6-7); [Psalm 42:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.9).

But the return of God binds up this breach. The deliverance from such a state is compared by our Lord to the joy that follows the pangs of childbirth, [John 16:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.21); nor can its effects upon the soul be more fitly represented than in the language of the Jews on their return from Babylon, [Psalm 126:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 126.1-3).

And this also is another season of peculiar instruction and comfort. By this, the soul obtains much deeper discoveries of its own corruptions, [Job 42:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.5-6); and more encouraging views of God's power and faithfulness, [Isaiah 25:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.1); [Isaiah 25:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.4). The depths of Satan's devices also are more clearly discerned, and, if its joys are less ecstatic than before, they are more pure and refined.

***~~3. This promise is fulfilled to us, at the hour of death.~~***

God never entirely withholds his chastening rod in this world. The whole of this life is a state of discipline. But at death there is an end of God's chastening rod. Whatever wounds may have pained us here—death will heal them all! [Revelation 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.4).

Then will this promise be fulfilled in its utmost extent. What amazing discoveries will be made to the soul on its first dismissal from the body! And with what inconceivable raptures will it be transported, as soon as ever it shall enter the gates of Heaven! Whatever it may have heard of the blessedness of the saints, it will surely say, that not a thousandth part had been declared to it. Then shall those descriptions given by the prophets all be realized, [Isaiah 60:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19-20).

As for the joys it experienced below, they shall appear as nothing in comparison with those it will then possess. What the saints tasted here was through the means of grace, and mixed with frequent sorrows, and, at best of short duration. But what they possess in Heaven will be immediate, unmixed, and everlasting!

But the true import of the promise leads me to show,

**II. This promise shall hereafter be more abundantly verified among God's ancient people.**

Certainly "their breach" is grievous, and "their wounds" are to all human appearance "incurable." So has God himself declared, [Jeremiah 30:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.12-15). Nevertheless God in due season will surely "restore health to them, and heal them of their wounds, [Jeremiah 30:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.16-17). The word therefore should here be translated "nevertheless." Through the preaching of the Gospel shall this blessed consummation be effected, [Jeremiah 33:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.6), and happiness shall be restored, not to that nation only, but through them to the whole world! [Jeremiah 33:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.7-11) with [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15).

And oh! what light and joy and holiness will then abound!

Methinks, when it is said that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," we must understand it as predicting not the *extent*only of divine knowledge, but its *depth*also, and the blessedness arising from it, "the light of the moon will then indeed be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days!" Yes "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun itself ashamed, when the Lord Almighty shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously, [Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23)." This is beyond all doubt to be accomplished in due season, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! [Isaiah 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.10)."

Of the extent of their knowledge in that day, and the fullness of their joy, we at present can form scarcely any conception. What surprising views will they then have of the whole mystery of redemption, when they shall see all the prophecies fulfilled, and all the types and shadows realized in the person and work of Christ! Of that season, no less than of Heaven, it is said, "The city will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof. There shall be no night there; and they need no light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light; and they shall reign forever and ever! [Revelation 21:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.23-26); [Revelation 22:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.5)."

**APPLICATION.**

***~~1. Let us look forward then to that blessed period.~~***

We need not be *distracting*our minds, or the minds of others, with curious questions about the precise manner in which Christ and his saints will reign; still less is it expedient to *dogmatize*upon this matter, as some are doing at this day; but we should look forward to it with holy joy, and expect it with most confident assurance; and the 98th Psalm should express the habitual frame of all our minds. [Psalm 98:1-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 98.1-9).

***~~2. Let us seek the foretaste of it in our own souls.~~***

Why should we rest satisfied with low measures of holiness or of joy, when it is our privilege to "rejoice in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory! [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)." We are not contented with the light of the moon, when we can have the light of the sun, nor are we satisfied with the sun in its early dawn, when we can enjoy it in its meridian height! Let us, then, extend this desire to all spiritual blessings, and never be satisfied, until we are as holy and as happy as God himself can make us.

***~~#905~~***

***~~GOD THE PROTECTOR OF HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 31:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 31.4-5)~~***

KJV. "Thus has the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord Almighty come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord Almighty defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it."

NIV. "This is what the LORD says to me: "As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey—and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor—so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will 'pass over' it and will rescue it."

The first of the commandments is, "You shall have no other gods before me." And that is directly violated, when we alienate from God the confidence that is due to him alone, and place it on any creature in preference to him. This was the sin which the prophet reproved, both in this and the whole foregoing chapter. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, had come against Jerusalem with a powerful, and, humanly speaking, irresistible army. Many of the Jews, instead of looking to Jehovah for his gracious and merciful protection, applied to Egypt for help, and carried their wealth to Egypt, in order to obtain it. God, offended with this lack of confidence in him, sent them word that the Egyptians should help in vain, and to no purpose; and that their real strength was, to sit still, and to rely on God alone. [Isaiah 30:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.1-7) compared with verses 1-3. If they would with real penitence and faith rely on him, He would afford them speedy and effectual deliverance. This assurance God delivered to them under the different images which are contained in my text; which show, not only what God would be to them, but what he will be to his Church and people in all ages of the world.

Let me, with a special view to these images, point out to you:

***~~I. The protection which God will afford to his people.~~***

We are told, that, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever; and that they who trust in him shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever! [Psalm 125:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.1-2)." But, as the emergency that existed at the time the prophet uttered my text was extremely urgent, so the images by which he was directed to encourage their trust in him, were precisely such as were suited to the occasion.

***~~1. God promised to protect them with the firmness of a lion.~~***

A lion, growling over his prey, regards not the shouts of a multitude of shepherds; unmoved himself, he infuses terror into them; and would soon make them repent of their audacity, if they dared to approach him.

In the same way, who shall prevail on Jehovah to relinquish his defense of Jerusalem? in reference to the Assyrian army, which God was determined to destroy, the prophet says, "The Lord Almighty has purposed; and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out; and who shall turn it back? [Isaiah 14:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.24-27)."

The same also we may say in reference to the weakest of all his saints, "If God is for you, then who can be against you, [Romans 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.31)." "Who is he who shall harm you, if you are followers of that which is good, [1 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.13)."

God is not only a tower of defense to his people to preserve them, but "a wall of fire round about them," that shall devour their assailants, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5). He may indeed suffer the enemies of his people to prevail for a season; and they may vaunt, as the Assyrians did, of all their conquests; but *they are only as a rod in Jehovah's hands*; and all which they effect is only as the axe or saw that accomplishes the will of him who uses it. But when they have effected his purpose, they themselves, who sought nothing but to gratify their own ambition, shall be made monuments of his righteous indignation! "The light of Israel will be to them for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day! [Isaiah 10:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.5-7); [Isaiah 10:12-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.12-17)." Yes, truly, "God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his good pleasure, [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.10);" and "when He works, who shall hinder it, [Isaiah 43:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.13)." "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, [Revelation 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.5)" shall assuredly prevail, though all the powers of earth and Hell were combined against him!

***~~2. God promised to protect them with the tenderness of a parent bird.~~***

A bird, though utterly unable to cope with a bird of prey which it sees hovering over its nest, will fly to protect its young; and, insensible to its own danger, will intercept its potent adversary, and rather perish itself than give up its offspring to the devourer!

In the same way, "for our miseries is Jehovah grieved, [Judges 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 10.16);" yes, in all our afflictions, too, our God himself is afflicted, [Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9);" and whoever "touches us, touches the apple of his eye [Zechariah 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.8)."

When Pharaoh had overtaken the Hebrews at the Red Sea, "the pillar of fire, which had hitherto led the fugitives, went and stood between the Egyptian camp and them; so that they came not near to his people all the night," during which period an opening was made for their escape, [Exodus 14:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.19-21). In the same way, in ten thousand instances has God interposed for his people in every age; nor is there anyone, who, if he could review all the dealings of God towards him, might not find in his own experience, some interpositions fully answerable to the image that is before us.

***~~3. God promised to protect them with the success of the attendant angel.~~***

At the destruction of the Egyptian first-born, Jehovah, the Angel of the Covenant, accompanied the destroying angel; and, wherever he saw the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on the door-posts, immediately interposed, and constrained the destroyer to pass over that house. In remembrance of which marvelous deliverance, a feast was instituted, and was called "The Feast of the Lord's Passover [Exodus 12:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.23); [Exodus 12:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.27)." To that the prophet, in my text, refers; saying, that "Jehovah, passing over Jerusalem, will preserve it."

Now, so effectual was the Lord's intervention in that instance, that, while in every other house, throughout all the land of Egypt, the first-born both of man and beast was slain, in the houses of the Hebrews died not so much as one, [Exodus 12:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.29-30).

In the same way, when was so much as one true believer ever left to perish? We are expressly told, that "it is not the will of our Father that one of his little ones should perish! [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14)." No; however sifted his people are, "not the smallest grain shall ever full upon the earth, [Amos 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.9)."

Behold the Apostle Paul; no less than forty people had bound themselves, by an oath, to murder him; and so well were their plans laid, that there did not appear the slightest chance for his escape. But God so ordered it, that Paul's own nephew overheard the plot, and, by a timely mention of it to the governor, defeated it; and thus was that valuable life preserved, [Acts 23:12-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 23.12-24).

Peter too, according to all human appearance, was consigned to death, there being only a few hours to elapse before he was to be brought forth from prison for execution. But with irresistible power did God cause the chains, with which his servant was bound, to fall off; and the prison doors to open, as it were of their own accord; and thus was the stroke averted in the very instant that it was about to fall! [Acts 12:6-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.6-11).

What dangers have awaited us, we shall never know until we stand before our God in judgment; but then it will be found, that God has been our shield from numberless assaults; and that, through the agency of his holy angels, we have "been kept, on ten thousand occasions, from dashing our foot against a stone! [Psalm 91:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 91.11-12)."

Such being the security promised to us, let us consider,

***~~II. Our duty resulting from it.~~***

This merciful care, which God grants to us, surely calls for corresponding feelings on our part. If God blesses us with such marvelous protection, then:

***~~1. We ought to surrender up ourselves to him in a way of Trust.~~***

The fault of the Hebrews was, that they leaned on an arm of flesh, instead of relying solely upon God. And we must be on our guard against this sad propensity. We are to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and to make Him our fear and Him our dread! [Isaiah 8:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.12-13). The language of David should, under any emergency whatever, be the language of our hearts, "Shall I lift up my eyes unto the hills (to any earthly powers)? From whence then comes our help? Our help comes from the Lord, who (is not only above them all, but made them all, yes,) made Heaven and earth! [Psalm 121:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 121.1-2). Bishop Horne's translation."

It is not possible for our confidence in God to be too strong, provided that we leave to God the time and manner of fulfilling his promises. He may, as he did in the case of Jerusalem, allow matters to proceed to the greatest extremity; but "the vision will come at its appointed time [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.3);" and, in a full assurance that it shall not tarry beyond that time, we should say, "Though he slay me—yet will I trust in him! [Job 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 13.15)." The well-known boast of the Apostle should be ours! [Romans 8:35-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.35-39). And in dependence upon God, we should hurl defiance on all our enemies, even as Hezekiah was taught to do in the very depth of his extremity! [Isaiah 37:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.22).

***~~2. We ought to surrender up ourselves to him in a way of Gratitude.~~***

"If the LORD had not been on our side—let Israel say: if the LORD had not been on our side when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us! [Psalm 124:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 124.1-4)."

Never, until all the wonders of God's love shall be revealed, shall we have any idea of the deliverances that have been given unto us, and of our obligation to God on account of them. "Satan, that subtle adversary, who beguiled our first parents in Paradise, has, on thousands of occasions, sought to draw our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ! [2 Corinthians 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.3)." Yes, "as a roaring lion, also, he has been seeking to devour us! [1 Peter 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8)." Is it owing to our own wisdom or strength that we have not fallen a prey unto his teeth? No! the Lord has interposed to screen us from his fiery darts; and has again and again rescued us from the snares which he had laid for our feet.

See how *David*was kept from shedding blood [1 Samuel 25:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 25.32-33), and *Peter*from utter apostasy [Luke 22:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31-32). And who can tell what evils *you*might have perpetrated, and what your state might have at this moment been, if God had not "kept you as the apple of his eye," and "borne you, as on eagle's wings," throughout this dreary wilderness! [Deuteronomy 32:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.10-11).

I tell you, brethren, that his visible interpositions for his people of old have been only shadows of what he has invisibly done, and is at this moment doing, for you, if only you place your trust in him; and that David's acknowledgment is that which it befits every one of you to make, "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him! [Psalm 37:39-40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.39-40)."

**3.** **We ought to surrender up ourselves to him in a way of Steadfastness.**

Believing in God, we have nothing to fear, and nothing even to think of, but how we may best serve and honor him. Paul, when in daily expectation of a cruel death, said, "None of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear unto me, so that I may but finish my course with joy, and fulfill the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus! [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24)."

And I would ask, of all who believe the declarations in my text, Should not such "love constrain you to live unto your God? [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14)."

Understand the determination which he formed from all eternity, and from which not all the wickedness of our ruined world has ever been able to divert him—to save our souls from eternal damnation by the sacrifice of his only dear Son in our stead.

Understand the merciful interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ between us and the wrath of our offended God, and his actually becoming a curse for us.

Understand his dying in our place and stead, and by his own obedience unto death effecting a reconciliation for us, and purchasing for us all the glory of Heaven.

Understand, I say, the deliverances shadowed forth by those given to Jerusalem, and spiritually fulfilled in you!

What do you think should be your feelings on the occasion, or your expression of them? Will there be any bounds to your love, any limits to your obedience, any intermission to your songs of praise? No! You will be "ready either to be bound or to die for His sake," who has "so loved you, and given himself for you!" "You will be satisfied with no attainment, until you shall awake up after the likeness of his perfect righteousness, [Psalm 17:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 17.15)."

***~~#906~~***

***~~SECURITY AND COMFORT IN CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.2)~~***

"A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind,  
 and a covert from the tempest;  
 as rivers of water in a dry place,  
 as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!"

***~~There is no greater blessing to a nation than a well-ordered government. The due administration of justice, together with the protection of our person and property, afford to any people a just ground of joy and thankfulness.~~***

Such a government did God promise to the Jews under Hezekiah; but a*greater than Hezekiah is here*. Under the figure of an earthly monarch, Christ is promised; and the text informs us:

***~~I. What blessings we enjoy in and through Christ.~~***

The metaphors, though four in number, suggest but two ideas:

***~~1. Security.~~***

We have very little conception of winds and tempests in this climate. But the wind that rent the mountains before, Elijah [1 Kings 19:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.11), and the tempest that desolated the land of Egypt, [Exodus 9:23-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 9.23-25), may serve to show us how welcome a secure place must be to one who is exposed to such formidable dangers.

Yet no storms on earth can fully paint to us the dangers to which we are exposed by reason of sin, [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.6). But the Lord Jesus Christ affords us perfect security from them all. In him we have a Goshen where no hail can come, a mountain which the wind can never affect. The billows, which shall overwhelm the whole creation besides, shall not be able to destroy us! In Christ, we have an ark that can never perish!

**2. Comfort.**

We, in this quarter of the globe, know as little of excessive drought and heat, as of overwhelming storms and tempests. But the state of the Israelites in the wilderness, [Exodus 17:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 17.2-3), and of Jonah at Nineveh, [Jonah 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jonah 4.8), may aid our conceptions. How delightful was the *gourd*to him, and how reviving to them were the *streams*that gushed from the rock!

In the same way, does not a soul oppressed with sin or persecution, or fainting with desire after righteousness, experience as much distress as they?

Behold then the preciousness of Christ! He will be not only as a shade or as water to the weary and thirsting soul—but as "*rivers*of water" that can never be exhausted, and a "shadow of a *great rock*" through which the beams of the sun can never penetrate. Many can attest his excellency in these respects. Nor shall any who seek refuge in him be ever disappointed of their hope.

But as these things are spoken of Christ as "a man," it will be proper to show:

***~~II. How we enjoy these blessing in Christ as "a man".~~***

Christ is truly and properly God, but he is God manifest in the flesh; and it is to him as incarnate that we stand indebted for these blessings.

***~~1. As man, he died for our sins.~~***

*To his atonement we owe all our hopes of salvation!*If he had not expiated our guilt we could never have obtained mercy. If he had not purchased for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, we never could have mortified our inward corruptions. But through his death we are freed from the apprehensions of wrath; and through his Spirit we are filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, [Romans 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.17). Hence our song will ever be, To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and honor! [Revelation 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5).

***~~2. As man, he intercedes for us in Heaven.~~***

*As our peace with God was accomplished by the death of Christ, so is it maintained by his intercession*. Now it is as man, that he appears in the presence of God for us; and lives on purpose to carry on this part of his priestly office. By virtue of this,  
our persons and services find *acceptance with God*, *pardon*is given us for our renewed transgressions, and *strength*is imparted to surmount our manifold temptations.

Hence is our salvation justly ascribed, and that in a very peculiar manner, to his intercession for us! [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25).

***~~3. As man, he is our Head and Representative.~~***

Christ is the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, [1 Corinthians 15:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.45); [1 Corinthians 15:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.47). Our life is now treasured up in him, that it may no longer be exposed to the assaults of our great adversary, [Colossians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.3). It has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and that out of his fullness all should receive, who shall ever be partakers of his grace, or of his glory, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16). Whether we need: *righteousness to justify us,  
wisdom to guide us, or  
sanctification to make us holy,  
we must look for all of it in and through Christ!*

As in Adam, our first covenant-head, all died, so in Christ, our new covenant-head, shall all be made alive! [1 Corinthians 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.22).

***~~4. As man, he shall judge the world in the last day.~~***

All judgment is committed to him because he is the Son of man, [John 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.27). And what can tend more to our security and comfort than this? Will He, who shed his blood for us, give up what he has so dearly purchased? Or will He who both interceded for us, and supplied our needs, consign us over to perdition? Will he not rather bear testimony in opposition to our fierce accuser, and own the work he had wrought both for us and in us? Doubtless, if we should feel a degree of security and comfort in having a very dear friend for our judge on earth, much more may we rejoice in having for our judge in the last day, him who bought us with his blood and renewed us by his Spirit.

We do not mean to exclude his Godhead from this great work of redemption—his deity is that which gives efficacy to all which he did and suffered as man. But nevertheless it is as man, that is, as the God-man, that we feel our relation to him, and have access unto him as our sympathizing friend.

**INFERENCES.**

***~~1. What objects of pity are those who have no saving interest in Christ!~~***

*Those who live in sin are exposed to all the wrath of a sin-avenging God!* Where, where will they flee for safety? Where will they even procure a drop of water in that land of drought and misery, to which they shall be banished? Alas! there is no protection but in *this city of refuge*; there is no water but in *this fountain*. O that men would consider what they shall do in the day of their visitation; and flee for refuge to the hope that is now set before them, [Hebrews 6:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.18).

***~~2. How highly privileged are those who believe in Christ~~***

They are not exempt from occasional distress either of soul or body, but they have an *almighty Friend*to whom they can carry their distress. They go to him when heavy-laden; and find rest unto their souls. They feel themselves secure in their blood-sprinkled dwellings. But their privileges will not be fully seen until the last day. Then how blessed they are in having a covert from the wrath that overwhelms the ungodly world! Then to have their Savior both for their witness and their judge! Let us all cleave to him with full purpose of heart; and desire to know him more and more as "our friend and our beloved!"

***~~#907~~***

***~~THE WORK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS PEACE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 32:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.16-17)~~***

KJV. "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

NIV. "Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever!"

***~~Through the introduction of sin into the world, man was altogether despoiled both of holiness and happiness. The design of God in sending his Gospel to us, was to restore both the one and the other to our fallen race.~~***

This in a former chapter is set forth under the image of the brute creation, which, having through the fall of man been reduced to a state of the greatest disorder, shall be restored once more to universal harmony and peace. "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea! [Isaiah 11:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.6-9)."

In the passage before us the same truth is set forth under a different image, namely, that of the vegetable creation; which, having been reduced to the condition of a wilderness through the curse inflicted on it, shall be rendered fruitful, even beyond the most fertile parts of Palestine in the most fruitful seasons.

That the passage really relates to the times of the Gospel, does not admit of doubt. In the beginning of the chapter it is said, "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness; and princes shall rule in judgment; and a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! verses 1-2." A season indeed of great desolation should intervene between the prophecy and its accomplishment, verses 9-11; but at the appointed time "the Spirit should be poured out in such abundance from on high, that the wilderness should become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be so productive as to be counted for a forest."

In my text the metaphor is explained; and we are told in plainer terms what shall be,

***~~I. The character of Gospel times.~~***

By "judgment and righteousness," I understand not merely that which is called justice between man and man, but universal holiness. And this will certainly characterize the Gospel dispensation.

This is evident from the very metaphor before us. In other parts of this prophecy the metaphor is yet further opened and explained. Thus in the 35th chapter it is said, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God …. . For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert …. . And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called the way of holiness; the impure shall not pass over it; but the redeemed shall walk there, [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2); [Isaiah 35:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.6); [Isaiah 35:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8-9)."

The change itself also is described in appropriate terms, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, [Isaiah 55:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.13)."

The works of the flesh are here contrasted with the fruits of the Spirit; and it is declared, that these latter shall abound on the face of the whole earth; and that, "as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth—so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations, [Isaiah 61:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.11)."

This is yet further evident from the universal testimony of Scripture. If we look into the Old Testament, we find the prophet Ezekiel describing that period thus, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and cause you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws! [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25-27)."

In the New Testament the same thing is continually declared. Even before the birth of our Savior, Zachariah, speaking of him as about to visit and redeem his people, represents the end of his coming as being to "deliver his people out of the hands of their (spiritual) enemies, that they may serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness before him all the days of their life! [Luke 1:67-75](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.67-75)."

And Paul assures us, that "the grace of God which brings salvation, was designed to teach us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world! [Titus 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.11-12)."

But it is not the occasional existence, so much as the abiding habit, of holiness, which is to distinguish this day.

"Judgment is to dwell, and righteousness to remain," in this our field. At all times, and under all circumstances, piety is to prevail. We are to be "fruitful in every good work, [Hebrews 13:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.21), and "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God! [Philippians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.11)."

Our blessed Lord told his disciples, that he "had ordained them that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain, [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16);" and through the whole world are they to be distinguished as "a holy nation, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)," and "a special people zealous of good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)."

Now it is greatly to be desired, that this distinction should be visible among us. But, if a heathen were directed by this mark to find the Gospel ministered in its purity, would he fix on us, on us individually, on us collectively, as possessing that inestimable treasure? Would he, if he followed us to our respective places of abode, and beheld the whole of our deportment through the day, and witnessed our spirit and temper under circumstances of trial, would he say, "That is the garden of the Lord, and those are the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, in which he is glorified? [Isaiah 58:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.11); [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3)."

O brethren, look well to this matter, and take care that you "shine as lights in a dark world, holding forth the Word of life," not by your profession merely, but by the whole of your conduct and conversation, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16).

That you may be encouraged to these exertions, consider,

***~~II. The fruit of Gospel experience.~~***

"The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever!" To this also the whole Scripture bears witness; and it is confirmed by fact also, that happiness is the inseparable companion of true piety. It is an attendant on piety:

***~~1. As the natural result of holy habits.~~***

A man cannot commit sin, but he will find it sooner or later productive of pain. He may roll it as a sweet morsel under his tongue for a moment; but it will prove the gall of asps within him. There is no exception to that truth, "The way of transgressors is hard."

But there is not a grace which can be exercised that does not tranquillize the mind. All imaginable graces, whether towards God or man, may be resolved into the one principle of love; and how sweet that is, we need not to observe; it carries its own evidence along with it. In truth, this is the very thing asserted in our text, "The fruit of righteousness is peace." Peace is the fragrance which that holy ointment invariably diffuses; as the Psalmist has said, "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward."

If it is thought that the duties of penitence and self-denial are rather of a painful nature—then we appeal to all who know what penitence and self-denial are—whether they have not found an exquisite joy in penitential sorrow, and a more lively satisfaction in the exercise of self-denial, than in all the gratifications which sin could possibly administer? We say again, without fear of contradiction, that there is no exception to this rule.

***~~2. As bringing with it the testimony of a good conscience.~~***

This is a source of unspeakable comfort, "Our rejoicing is this," says the Apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God—we have had our conduct in the world, [2 Corinthians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.12)." It will frequently happen that our principles and conduct may be misinterpreted; so that we may incur blame on account of those very things, which, if rightly viewed, would have entitled us to applause. But if we have a consciousness that we have really endeavored to fulfill the will of God, we shall not lay much to heart the obloquy that is cast upon us, but shall say with the Apostle, "It is a small matter to be judged by you or by man's judgment; yes, I judge not my own self; but he who judges me is the Lord, [1 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-4)."

In the hour of death more especially, will peace and assurance fill the soul of one who has truly and unreservedly devoted himself to God. Not that he will be trusting in a well-spent life as meritorious in the sight of God, or as able to justify him at the bar of judgment; no man who knows anything of the Gospel can entertain such a delusive hope as that; for the whole Scriptures testify that *Christ alone is the foundation of a sinner's hope, and that no man can be accepted by God but through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus*; but still a consciousness that we have truly lived to God and for God, in holy obedience to his commands, will be to us an evidence of the truth of our faith, and the sincerity of our love; and will inspire us with confidence in reference to the future judgment; for John says, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things; but if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence towards, God [1 John 3:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.18-20)."

Hence we may say to the whole world, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace! [Psalm 37:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.37)."

***~~3. As being honored with tokens of God's special approbation.~~***

God will "manifest himself unto his people as he does not unto the world." He will "shed abroad his love in their hearts;" and by the immediate influences of "his Spirit bear witness to, and with, their spirits, that they are his children." He will "seal, as it were, their souls unto the day of redemption," and give them already "the pledge and foretaste of their eternal inheritance."

But who are these favored people? Are they those who live in a neglect of holy duties, and in the commission of any known sin? No, "If any man regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him! [Psalm 66:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 66.18);" much less will he favor him with such communications as these. But "of his children, who keep his law, great shall be the peace, [Isaiah 54:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.13). [Psalm 119:165](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.165)"—even "a peace that passes all understanding!" "They shall go forthwith joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands! [Isaiah 55:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.12)."

***~~Learn then from hence, brethren,~~***

***~~1. How to know that you are Christians indeed.~~***

Says our blessed Lord:  
"By their *fruits*you shall know them."  
"Bring forth much *fruit*; so shall you be my disciples."  
"He who has my commandments, and keeps them—he it is the one who loves me."

You well know that it is in this way that you form your estimate of a field, or of a tree; and this is the only true way of estimating your own character. *Your profession of the gospel is of no value, any further than the truth of the gospel is attested by your practice.* You may say, *Lord, Lord!*with as much confidence as you will; but, if you do not the will of your heavenly Father, Christ will disown you, and cast you from him at the last day.

You may now so resemble the wheat among which you grow, as not to admit of being easily distinguished from it by a human eye, or separated from it by a human hand. But in the last day the tares and the wheat will be infallibly separated from each other; the one for the fire of Hell, and the other for the granary of Heaven! [Matthew 13:28-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.28-30); [Matthew 13:40-43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.40-43).

I say then, bring yourselves to this test; and never be satisfied with any faith or any profession that does not approve itself genuine according to the standard of God's unerring word.

***~~2. How to be happy in your own souls.~~***

It is not any earthly gratification that can make you happy. Our Lord does not say, Blessed are the rich, the mirthful, the respected; but, "Blessed are the humble, the pure, the meek, and those who are even persecuted for righteousness' sake, [Matthew 5:3-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.3-12). [Luke 6:20-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.20-26)."

We grant that this is far from according with the opinions of the world at large; but it is not the less true on that account. Those who have never sought for happiness in God, can have no idea of the happiness that is to be found in him. But the more anyone knows of the world, the more will he see that "Vanity and vexation of spirit!" is written upon everything that is in it. Seek not then your happiness, beloved, in "broken cisterns that can hold no water, but seek it in the Fountain of living waters! [Jeremiah 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.13)"—even in Him who is a source of blessedness to all his people! [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9). Then shall you:  
enjoy "a full assurance of hope," while you live, [Hebrews 6:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.11);  
"have an abundant entrance into Heaven" when you die, [2 Peter 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.10-11);  
and sit down forever "at the right hand of your God, where there is fullness of joy for evermore! [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11)."

***~~#908~~***

***~~THE USE AND EXCELLENCY OF TRUE WISDOM~~***

***~~[Isaiah 33:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.6)~~***

KJV. "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of your times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure!"

NIV. "He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure!"

This is spoken respecting *Hezekiah*, king of Judah. His country had been invaded by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, by whom all the fenced cities of Judah had been taken. To arrest his course, and to save Jerusalem itself, Hezekiah sent to implore forgiveness for having rebelled against Sennacherib (to whom King Ahaz had made the kingdom tributary), and to declare his readiness to submit to any terms which the conqueror should impose. A very heavy contribution in silver and gold was exacted of him; and he was constrained to send "all the silver that was found in the House of the Lord and in the king's house, and to cut off the gold from the doors of the Temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which he himself had overlaid," in order to satisfy the demand, [2 Kings 18:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.13); [2 Kings 18:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 18.16).

Having thus paid the tribute, he hoped for peace. But Sennacherib soon violated his engagement; and, setting aside the treaty, sent his servant against Jerusalem, with an immense army, to besiege it, verse 17.

No hope now remained to Hezekiah, but from God himself; to whom he applied in fervent prayer, [2 Chronicles 32:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 32.20). And, on that occasion, the Prophet Isaiah, who had joined with him in crying unto God, was inspired to denounce against Sennacherib this judgment, "Woe to you that spoil, and you were not spoiled; and deal treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with you! When you shall cease to spoil, you shall be spoiled; and when you shall make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with you, verse 1."

This was speedily and literally fulfilled; for a hundred and eighty-five thousand of Sennacherib's army being slain by an angel in one night, the remainder of them broke up the siege and retreated, leaving a great quantity of spoil behind them; and Sennacherib himself, on his return home, was "murdered by his own sons, while he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his God! [Isaiah 37:36-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.36-38)."

Thus did prayer effect what all the wealth of Hezekiah was unable to accomplish; and the reformation made among his subjects procured for him what all his armies had in vain endeavored to effect—a complete deliverance from his powerful and victorious enemies, "Wisdom and knowledge, accompanied with real piety, became to him the stability of his times, and the strength of salvation; and the fear of the Lord was his best and most effectual treasure."

Now, from this passage I will take occasion to show the influence of true wisdom:

First, As promoting the stability of an empire.

Secondly, As advancing the prosperity of the soul.

***~~I. Consider wisdom as promoting the stability of a country.~~***

By "wisdom and knowledge" we are not to understand what we generally comprehend under the term "science;" for we do not apprehend that the Jewish nation, at that time, or indeed at any time, made any great proficiency in that species of learning. By "wisdom and knowledge" is meant a conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God; a wisdom inseparably connected with "the fear of the Lord." This appears from the preceding verse, where it is said, "The Lord is exalted; for he dwells on high; He has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness; and wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of your times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure."

Indeed, it may be doubted whether what we call learning and science do at all necessarily advance the stability of an empire. They are surely of very extensive use to an empire, in a variety of views; but they are capable of great abuse; and, if separated from religion, may lead to the overthrow, as well as to the establishment, of an empire; as the recent history of a neighboring kingdom has evinced.

But the knowledge of which my text speaks, is a security to a kingdom. That "knowledge" is thus described by the Prophet Jeremiah, "Do not let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories, glory in this—that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord! [Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.23-24)."

This explanation of the terms necessarily leads our minds to God as reconciled to us in the Son of his love; for it is in Christ Jesus alone that "the loving-kindness" of God has free scope for exercise towards fallen man; or indeed can be exercised at all, consistently with the demands of "righteousness and judgment;" and it is this knowledge alone which generates a filial "fear" in the heart of man.

Now, of this "wisdom and knowledge" it may be justly affirmed, that it tends to the stability of every empire in which it is found. So far as it prevailed at any time in the Jewish State, (for it was revealed to them, though darkly, in their ceremonial law,) they prospered; and whenever it was banished, they were delivered up into the hand of their enemies; as their whole history very clearly shows.

The separation of the ten tribes, which proved such a permanent and fatal calamity to the whole nation, was appointed by God as a punishment for that iniquity which Solomon had introduced, and which had overspread the whole land. On the other hand, in consequence of the reformation introduced by Hezekiah, (which gave, as it were, for a time, a new character to his people,) the Prophet says, "Their place of defense shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure! verse 16." Yes, "the Lord will be to them as a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein can go no galley with oars, neither can gallant ship pass thereby, verse 21;" that is, while they were protected by the river, they should be inaccessible by vessels of any kind, the waters being too tempestuous for smaller boats, and too full of rocks and shoals to be navigated by larger ships; and thus, in the midst of hostile nations, should "Jerusalem be a quiet habitation, and a tabernacle that not all the power of their most inveterate enemies could move, verse 20."

True it is, that we, at this day, are not to look for such visible interpositions of God as were given to the Jews under what we may call their Theocracy. But God is still the Governor of the Universe, and does still deal with his people, in a measure, as in former days—punishing or protecting them, according as their iniquities are flagrant, or their piety profound.

I cannot but think, that though, for our abounding iniquities, God sorely chastened our nation in the last war, the prayers of thousands in this land prevailed to avert from us a vast pressure of calamity, to which all the rest of Europe was exposed. I am certain that "true wisdom and knowledge" have a proper tendency to promote our national welfare; as it is said, "Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people! [Proverbs 14:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 14.34)." Piety, so far as it is true and genuine, will diffuse, through all ranks of people, a due attention to their respective duties, calling forth from Rulers equity and benevolence, and generating among subjects the habits of industry and content. Formed as human nature is, we cannot expect these things to be universal; but I hesitate not to say, that, in proportion as piety is the predominant feature of any people, there will be among them a patriotic ardor for the benefit of the community, and a simultaneous effort for the promotion of it.

But, to bring the matter more home to our own business and bosoms, I proceed to observe,

***~~II. That "wisdom and knowledge, when attended with a fear of the Lord," will advance the prosperity of the soul.~~***

"The fear of the Lord" is an essential part of true wisdom; as the Psalmist has said, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, [Psalm 111:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 111.10)." And this is indeed "a treasure," an inestimable treasure, to everyone who possesses it. The fear of the Lord is, in fact, a mine of wealth—of intellectual wealth, of moral wealth, of spiritual wealth, and of eternal wealth!

***~~The fear of the Lord is a source of intellectual wealth.~~***

However this wisdom may be reputed as folly by the ungodly world, and considered as an indication of a weak mind—it most assuredly enlarges the understanding, and elevates its possessor above his fellows. Yes, and above others also, who in natural capacity, and in literary attainments, are far his superiors!

If we set before us two people—one illiterate, and the other versed in arts and sciences, we would suppose, of course, that there can be no comparison between the two in point of intellect; and this is true, so far as arts and sciences are concerned. But let the weaker of them be imbued with divine wisdom, and actuated by the fear of God, and he will have a far more accurate apprehension of all the things of time and sense than the man of learning has ever attained!

David says, "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts! [Psalm 119:98-100](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.98-100)."

The mere worldly man, in his estimate of things, keeps eternity out of view. It is therefore no wonder that he "calls evil good, and good evil; and puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! [Isaiah 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.20)." But the man who is taught of God has learned to view things in their true light, even as God himself views them; and he speaks of them in accordance with the representation given of them in the inspired volume. The principle of piety which is implanted in his soul has corrected and rectified his judgment.

If the conversation of these two men, the learned and the unlearned, for the space of one hour, were recorded—we would be perfectly amazed at the mass of error contained in the learned man; while truth, with perhaps scarcely any mixture of error, pervaded the pious man.

In fact, if the most learned of unregenerate men were, in his daily conversation, to betray as much ignorance of philosophical truth as he does of moral and religious truth, he would, to say the least, stand very low in the estimation of all who knew him; so true is that declaration of our blessed Lord, that "God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes! [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)."

I again therefore say, that the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus is that which alone deserves the name of "wisdom;" and that all other knowledge, though, in reference to earthly things of the highest value—is yet, in reference to heavenly things, no better than learned folly; as the Scriptures have most pointedly declared; for it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise man? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world! [1 Corinthians 1:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.19-20)."

***~~The fear of the Lord is a mine of moral wealth.~~***

A man imbued with divine "wisdom" has within himself an entirely new standard, whereby to judge of morals, and to regulate his life. Previous to the enlightening of his mind by the Spirit of God, and to his acquaintance with God as reconciled to him in Christ Jesus—he was satisfied with refraining from outward acts of sin; he took little notice of his inward inclinations; he thought little of the sensual look, or the angry word; though God himself tells us, that in his estimation, the one is adultery, and the other murder.

He made little account, also, of what the Apostle calls "spiritual filthiness, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1);" such as, pride, envy, discontent, covetousness, and the whole list of corruptions that reside chiefly in the soul. In a word, he was ignorant of the extent of the moral law, which requires a perfect conformity to God's mind and will in everything. But now he can be satisfied with nothing less than a perfect transformation into the divine image. He longs to "mortify the whole body of sin;" and his one continued labor through life is, to "put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness! [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24)."

Now, then, compare him with the unregenerate man in this respect also; and say whether he is not greatly enriched by his heavenly knowledge, and this fear of God? If it is true that man by sin was impoverished at first; then it is also true, that every man is enriched in proportion as he is sanctified. We may instance this in one single disposition, "a meek and quiet spirit;" respecting which I am authorized to affirm, that, in the sight of God, "it is an ornament of great price! [1 Peter 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.4)." Our Lord compares such graces to "gold tried in the fire;" and declares the possessor of them to be truly rich! [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18). We say, then, in reference to all such moral attainments, that they are a rich "treasure;" since "godliness, with contentment, is great gain [1 Timothy 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.6).

***~~The fear of the Lord is a mine of spiritual wealth.~~***

Here I must bespeak your candor; because, in bringing forth "the deep things of God, [1 Corinthians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10)," I may be led into a field not commonly explored by the great and learned, 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. But, without entering into this view of divine wisdom, I cannot do justice to my subject.

I observe, then, that *"the fear of God" opens, if I may so say, a new world to him in whom it is found.*To speak of God as giving to his redeemed people a new sense, would surely be erroneous; for the spiritual man has no new faculty, but only a new application and use of the faculties he before possessed; but the Spirit of God, at the time of our conversion, does bring new objects to our senses; and enables us, through faith, to discern things which are altogether hidden from the carnal man, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14).

Nor let this appear strange. We all know the power of glasses to bring to our view things which, on account of their diminutiveness or distance, are incapable of being clearly discerned by our unassisted eyes. We know, too, the power of light, which can render even the motes in the air visible to the naked eye, yes, and visible to one man, while they are hidden from another who is close at his side.

Now, such is the power with which the Spirit of God invests us, when he imparts to us "a spiritual discernment, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)." He brings to the eye of our minds "Him who is invisible! [Hebrews 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.27);" and reflects such a light upon spiritual objects, as to give us a clear apprehension of them, and to make us as certain of their existence as if we beheld them with our bodily eyes!

For instance, the man who is truly taught of God, sees God himself upon his throne as a reconciled God and Father; and beholds also the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, perpetually interceding for him. He apprehends, also, the love of God beaming in the Savior's countenance; and "comprehends it too, so far as a finite creature can comprehend it, in all its breadth and length, and depth and height! [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)." By the Holy Spirit, also, he is enabled to realize in his soul those divine impressions, "a spirit of adoption," "the witness of the Spirit," "the sealing of the Spirit," and "the pledge of the Spirit;" and by means of these impressions, he feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart," and is filled with "a peace that passes all understanding," and "a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory!"

I am aware that I have here entered upon ground untrodden by the natural man, and therefore unknown to him, and despised by him. But "among those who are mature," as the Apostle says, "we speak wisdom; not indeed the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom of God in a mystery," which yet is "revealed to all whom God instructs by his Holy Spirit! 1 Corinthians 2:6-7; [1 Corinthians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.10)."

And now, I ask, What "treasure" in the universe can be compared with this? What is all earthly science in comparison with this? It is only as the twinkling of a star when compared with the splendor of the noon-day sun. This is well called "a treasure hidden in a field;" to purchase which, every wise man will part with all that he possesses in the world! [Matthew 13:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.44).

***~~But we can never appreciate the fear of the Lord aright, until we regard it as putting us into the possession of eternal wealth.~~***

We are told, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come! [1 Timothy 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 4.8)." Its value, if this world alone were considered, would be inestimable; but when eternity is taken into the account, "its riches are absolutely unsearchable!" So that if all the angels in Heaven were to exert their powers, they would never be able to compute them. Who shall say what it is to be admitted into the presence of the Most High; to behold the Savior face to face; to be with him on his throne, and to be joint-heirs of his glory? In attempting to bring before you such a subject as this, we only "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

But all the glory and felicity of Heaven are ours, if only we truly fear God. Indeed, God himself tells us, that "his delight is in those who fear him." And what, I would ask, shall be done to those whom God delights to honor? Not even the angels around the throne are so blessed as those whom the Savior has washed in his own blood, and clothed in his own righteousness, and "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24" For the saints are represented as standing immediately around the throne of God; whereas the angels are placed in an exterior circle round about the saints, [Revelation 7:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9-11). And well it may be so, since the angels have but the righteousness of a creature; while the saints are clothed in the righteousness of Emmanuel, their redeeming God!

I need not ask what the wisdom of this world can do for us in comparison with this? In the view of these things, it is mere "foolishness! [1 Corinthians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.19)." It may somewhat assist us in this world; but it can do nothing for us in the world to come!

Enough, I think, has now been said to elucidate my text; and to show, that that "wisdom" which brings in its train "the fear of God" is the richest of all "treasures;" and that, though a man possess nothing else, "in having that, he really possesses all things! 2 Corinthians 6:10."

***~~And now permit me to recommend this wisdom to your special attention.~~***

For the attainment of it, all our noble universities were formed. Certainly our advantages, for the prosecution of it, are exceedingly great. Our freedom from earthly cares, and our seclusion from the world, afford us valuable opportunities for the acquisition of self-knowledge, and the knowledge of our God. Let us only be convinced that the pursuit of these is "wisdom," and that the possession of them is "treasure," and we shall have reason to bless our God for the peculiar benefits which we here enjoy.

Let me not, however, be thought to undervalue human learning. I am far from wishing to detract from its merits. It is, as I have before said, of exceeding great value, both to the State, and to the person enriched by it. It has in the world a just pre-eminence above rank or wealth, and deservedly raises the possessor of it in the estimation of until around him. It is not the man of splendid title, or of great estate, who stands high in the esteem of his countrymen; but the man who, by his wisdom and knowledge, is enabled to explore the depths of learning, and to instruct mankind in the different departments of science. I therefore would earnestly press upon my hearers, a diligent prosecution of knowledge in all those branches which are held in repute among us, and which administer to the improvement both of ourselves and others.

But yet, its God, without intending to depreciate the sacrifices which he had enjoined, says, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" so, without intending to disparage human learning, I would say, "Wisdom, divine wisdom, is the principal thing! Therefore get wisdom; and with all your getting, get understanding, [Proverbs 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.7)." Follow David in this respect, "One thing have I desired of the Lord," says he, "which I will seek after, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple! [Psalm 27:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.4)."

And, if for this you are called to make any sacrifice, learn from Paul to say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord! [Philippians 3:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.7-8)."

I would further say: Spare no pains for the attainment of this spiritual knowledge. We well know what labor many endure in the prosecution of earthly knowledge; and shall we do less for the attainment of that which is divine? Nor let us be satisfied with a superficial view, and a slight experience, of these things; but rather, whatever we may have attained, let us, with Paul, "forget the things which are behind; and reach forth unto those that are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! [Philippians 3:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.12-14)."

We have *enemies*, greater than Sennacherib, to withstand, and *difficulties*greater than Hezekiah's to overcome. We have to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil; but the principle which prevailed in Hezekiah, will prevail in us; and the victory which awaited him, awaits us also, if we will betake ourselves to God in prayer, and place all our confidence in him alone. "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the strength of salvation" to us; and we shall be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us!" And well may such a victory be expected of us.

Let us seek, then, "the true riches," even those which Christ has purchased for us on the cross, and which he freely offers to us in his Gospel. We must all admit that these spiritual treasures have had but little attraction hitherto in our eyes, and that we have sadly misimproved the talent committed to us. But henceforth let us awake to our duty, and no longer hide our talent in a napkin. Let us remember, that "where much has been given—there much will be required;" and that if we labor not for these riches, we only deceive our own souls; for "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also!"

***~~#909~~***

***~~PROTECTION PROMISED TO THE GODLY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 33:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.16)~~***

"He shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

*We cannot judge of men's moral or spiritual state by the dispensations of God's providence towards them.* Among the Jews indeed, virtue was inculcated and enforced chiefly by temporal sanctions; and their national prosperity or adversity bore a very manifest reference to their national conduct. In some degree also the same observation will extend to individuals among them.

But to us, under the Gospel, God has not bound himself to distinguish his favorites by any temporal advantages. Nevertheless, what the pious Jews enjoyed visibly in relation to their bodies—that the obedient Christian shall enjoy invisibly in his soul.

To enter properly into the subject before us, we must consider,

***~~I. The character to whom the promise is made.~~***

This appears clearly in the two preceding verses; in one of which it is implied, and in the other it is clearly expressed:

***~~1. He is sincere in his profession of religion.~~***

The greater part of the Jews were "sinners in Zion, and hypocrites;" and they had good reason to tremble for their approaching calamities. The person spoken of in the text is placed in direct opposition to them; he really belongs to Zion, and to Zion's God. He does not make religion a cloak for habitual and indulged lusts; or profess what he does not experience; if he implores mercy as a "miserable sinner;" and declares his trust in the mere "mercy of God through Christ Jesus;" and desire "that he may henceforth live a sober, righteous, and godly life, to the glory of God's holy name"—he does not mock God with unmeaning words, or hypocritically assume a character which belongs not to him; he feels in his heart what he utters with his lips; and he desires to fulfill his duties in Zion, as much as to enjoy her privileges.

***~~2. He is consistent in the practice of it.~~***

He has learned in a measure that important lesson, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good! [Romans 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.9)." The whole tenor of his conversation is agreeable to the strictest rules of righteousness. In all his dealings he is both just and honorable, not taking advantage of the ignorance or necessities of others, but endeavoring to do unto others, as he would want others to do unto him.

Nor is he less observant of his *words*than of his actions; he not only "walks righteously," but "speaks uprightly." He rigidly adheres to truth, and avoids every deviation from it, whether in criminating others, or exculpating himself.

As he thus "cleaves to what is good, so he abhors that which is evil." Could he gain ever so much by dishonesty or oppression, or were he offered ever so great a bribe to bias his judgment to violate his conscience—he would "despise the gain," and "shake from his hands the polluted gift" with utter abhorrence!

Were he advised to do anything injurious or vindictive, he would "stop his ears" with indignation, and not allow the thought for one moment to dwell upon his mind.

Did a contaminating object present itself to his view, or anything whereby his own corruptions might be stirred up—he would "shut his eyes," even like holy Job, who "made a covenant with his eyes that he would not look upon a maiden! [Job 31:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 31.1)."

We do not say that the Christian is never drawn aside through the influence of temptation and inward corruption; (for then where shall we find a Christian upon earth?) but if at any time he be overtaken with a fault, he returns to God with deepest humiliation and contrition, and renews his course with increased vigilance and circumspection.

That this is indeed the character to whom alone the promise in the text is made, is evident from parallel passages in the Psalms, [Psalm 15:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 15.1-5); [Psalm 24:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 24.3-5), and from the strongest possible declarations in the New Testament, [1 John 3:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.6-10). O that all people, whether professors of religion or others, would duly consider this!

Our conduct must be upright towards God and man; we must embrace the religion of the Gospel with sincerity, and adorn it by a holy conduct; nor can a person of any other character than this have any part or lot in the promises of God.

Let us now turn our attention to,

***~~II. The promise itself.~~***

To understand this, we must consider the occasion whereon it was delivered. The Assyrian army, that had overrun almost the whole of Judea, was now encompassing Jerusalem. The wicked Jews are given up to terror and consternation; but the righteous are encouraged:

***~~1. With a promise of protection.~~***

A fortress situated on an eminence which no weapons can reach, and founded on a rock which no human efforts can shake, may be considered as impregnable. Such a place should God be to his obedient people.

To us who are surrounded with spiritual enemies, the promise has a spiritual import. "The archers will shoot at us!" The world, the flesh, and the devil will combine against us to destroy us; but the true Christian "shall dwell on high," out of their reach; and "his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks" which cannot be undermined.

If his enemies wound his body, they shall "not be able to kill his soul;" for that is "hidden with Christ in God;" and he may say to his enemies, as Hezekiah said to the besieging and blaspheming general, "The virgin the daughter of Zion has despised you, and laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you! [2 Kings 19:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 19.21)."

***~~2. With a promise of provision.~~***

There are but two ways in which a fortress, which will not capitulate, can be taken; namely, by assault or famine. Against both of these God promised to guard his obedient people; for as their fortress would be impregnable, so it would be supplied with manna from Heaven, and with water springing out of the rocks on which they dwelt.

To us also the promise may be applied with strictest propriety. Our enemies may deal with us as with Paul and Silas of old, who were cruelly scourged, and thrust into an inner prison, and their feet were held fast in the stocks. But, though there was no access to them for earthly friends, were the visits of their God intercepted? Could their supplies of strength and consolation be cut off? Did not rather their consolations abound as their afflictions abounded? Thus it shall be with us, "bread shall be given us" for the support of our souls, and "the Holy Spirit shall be within us a well of water, springing up" for our continual refreshment.

Difficulties and dangers we may experience, but they shall issue only in the contusion of our enemies, and in brighter discoveries of God's power und grace!

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

**1. To those who rest in mere presumptuous hopes.**

The wicked Jews laughed at the judgments of God when they were at a distance, but were filled with horror at their approach, and cried out, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Similar consternation will before long seize on those who now slight the threatenings of the Gospel. The day of vengeance is hastening on apace, and God will then show himself to be "a consuming fire! [Hebrews 12:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.29)."

How will his enemies then stand appalled! [Psalm 73:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.19).

How "will they cry to the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from *the wrath of the Lamb!*[Revelation 6:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 6.15-17)."

How terrible will the devouring fire then appear!

How awful will those everlasting burnings be, in which they will be doomed to dwell!

Let the "sinners in Zion," the people who name the name of Christ without departing from iniquity, awake from their delusions!

Let "the hypocrites" also deceive themselves no longer.

Let a holy fear possess all our souls; let us cry out, as on the day of Pentecost, "What shall we do to be saved?"

Let us improve the present season of God's mercy and forbearance in "fleeing from the wrath to come!"

***~~2. To those who are agitated with unbelieving fears.~~***

Many spend their time in anxious inquiries, Will God save *me?*Well would it be if we would leave God to do his part, and mind only our own. God's part is to save us. Our part is to serve and glorify God. This is obvious in the passage before us, and in numberless other passages of Holy Writ.

*We have nothing to fear but sin!* Let us be sincere in embracing the Gospel, and consistent in obeying it, and we need not fear the united attempts of men and devils. God is engaged to be the God of his believing and obedient people; and, "if he is *for*us—then who can be *against*us?" He will "hide us in his pavilion, [Psalm 27:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.5)," where we shall be surrounded with hosts of angels for our guard, and supplied with the richest viands for our support! "In the floods of great waters they shall not come near us [Psalm 32:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.6-7)." Let us then dismiss our unbelieving fears, and look to him to "fulfill his promises, wherein he has caused us to put our trust."

***~~#910~~***

***~~THE CHURCH'S SECURITY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 33:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.20-22)~~***

KJV. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities; your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us."

NIV. "Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken. There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us!"

In times of national calamity or danger, if we do not immediately see the means of our preservation, "our hearts are apt to meditate terror," and to tremble even for the ark of God. But, though we ought to mourn for the desolations of Zion, and to desire its prosperity, *we may safely leave the concerns of the church to him who has founded it on a rock, and who is incessantly engaged for its defense*. God may purge his floor, and burn up the chaff; but he will not allow one grain of pure wheat to be lost.

This was the consolatory truth with which the prophet encouraged the godly, while he foretold the miseries which the Jewish nation should endure in the Babylonish captivity; and *it is equally applicable to the church of God in all ages*. In the words before us are contained,

***~~I. The promise which God makes to his Church.~~***

***~~The Church is here compared to Jerusalem and the tabernacle, particularly with a view to its weakness and danger.~~***

*Jerusalem*was "the city of their solemnities," where all the tribes went up at stated seasons to worship God; and *the tabernacle was the place where God in a more especial manner revealed himself to his believing people*. But though, in these points of view, they were objects of God's peculiar regard, they were at the same time peculiarly exposed to danger. Jerusalem was encompassed with enemies, who incessantly sought its destruction; and the tabernacle (which on this account is mentioned rather than the temple) was assailed by storms and tempests, in the wilderness, and in Shiloh, for many hundred years.

Thus the Church is that society of godly people, to which all in every place unite themselves, as soon as ever they are converted to God; and it enjoys exclusively the manifestations of God's love and favor. But it is hated by the world with a deadly hatred; and is often threatened by all the powers of earth and Hell.

**But God promises that, notwithstanding its weakness, it shall enjoy quietness and stability.**

This was in part fulfilled in the preservation of the Jews at those seasons when all the males were withdrawn from the country, and collected in Jerusalem; none of their enemies ever being permitted to take advantage of their absence, and to attack their land at those times. It was also fulfilled in part, when the temple worship was restored after the Babylonish captivity.

But its full accomplishment must be looked for in the apostolic and millennial periods. In the days of the Apostles the Church was assaulted on every side; but it defied the storms, and stood unmoved in the midst of all its enemies. Hypocrites indeed were cast down; but the Church itself stood, "not one of its stakes was moved, nor one of its cords broken."

From the days of Christ to the last period of time may it be said, with exultation and triumph,  
"Look upon our Zion;"  
though apparently defenseless—it stands secure;  
though fiercely assailed, it is "a quiet habitation;"  
though it is as a sycamore planted in the midst of the sea, it can never be rooted up.

What our ears have heard, "our eyes have seen;" and we believe that it shall endure to all generations.

Nor will this appear improbable, if we consider,

***~~II. The means of its accomplishment.~~***

**1.** **The way whereby this promise shall be fulfilled is set forth Figuratively.**

Jerusalem was despised as having no river to protect it, just as the Church also is on account of its defenseless state. But God promises that "he himself will be to it as a broad and rapid river." But it may be said that if, in one view, a river defends a city, in another view it affords means of attacking it to advantage. But God fully obviates this by saying, that he will be such a river as shall not be navigated by vessels, either great or small; yes, that in protecting his Church, he will show himself to be "the glorious," the irresistible "Jehovah." Hence that triumphant language of the Psalmist, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, count the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the generation following; for this God is our God forever and ever! [Psalm 48:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 48.12-14)."

***~~2. The way whereby this promise shall be fulfilled is set forth Plainly.~~***

The Church is under the immediate government of God, as Israel was of old. He is its Judge, its Lawgiver, and its King—who, while he requires the obedience of his people, is pledged by that very relation to afford them his protection. Men, standing in that relation to us, may be overcome; and we may fall together with them; but we are thrice reminded, that it is Jehovah who is our defense. Whom then can we have to fear, when the honor, the power, the veracity of Jehovah—are pledged for our protection? How absurd is it to be alarmed on account of our own weakness, or of the power and malignity of our enemies! The answer which David gave to those who persuaded him to flee, is that which should be our solace in the most discouraging circumstances, "How do you say to my soul: Flee as a bird to your mountain, for the foundations are destroyed, and what can the righteous do?" Tell me not of the failure of earthly helps, for "Jehovah is in his holy temple, Jehovah's throne is in Heaven! [Psalm 11:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.1-4)."

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. Where we are to look for the continued enjoyment of our religious privileges.~~***

It is a mercy to us, that, notwithstanding the enmity of the carnal mind against God is as great as ever, we are preserved by the laws from such persecutions as have been endured by the Church in former ages. But men are changing, and laws may change with them. Our safety therefore does not depend on man, but on God; and on him alone must we rely for the peace and prosperity of Zion. Let us trust in him; and "he will be a wall of fire round about us, and the glory in the midst of us, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5)."

***~~2. Where we are to look for the peace and stability of our own souls.~~***

We should first take care that God is indeed the Judge, the Lawgiver, and the King whom we sincerely obey; for, *if we refuse allegiance to him, it will be in vain to expect protection from him*. But, if we have the testimony of our conscience that we devote ourselves sincerely to him, we may say with David, "I will not fear, though the earth be moved, and the hills be carried into the midst of the sea."

We have an almighty Defender, who is interested in the welfare of his subjects, and is moreover pledged to us by promise and by oath. Let us then "believe his declaration—so shall we prosper; and believe his promises—so shall we be established." "We shall be even as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but stands fast forever! [2 Chronicles 20:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 20.20). [Psalm 125:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.1)."

***~~#911~~***

***~~ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE WEAK~~***

***~~[Isaiah 33:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.23)~~***

KJV. "The lame take the pray."

NIV. "Even the lame will carry off plunder."

*It is impossible to read the Scriptures with attention, and not be struck with the amazing condescension of God towards His poor, weak, and desponding people.* I think we may say, that if God had permitted them to dictate to him what he should say for their encouragement, they could never have ventured to put into his mouth what he has really spoken; so inconceivably gracious and condescending are the promises which he has given them.

Let us only look at one or two which are recorded by the Prophet Isaiah. Speaking of his enemies, who thought to injure his people with impunity, he says, "He brings down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he lays it low; he lays it low, even to the ground; he brings it even to the dust; the foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the feet of the needy! [Isaiah 26:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.5-6)."

And again, "Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain, [Isaiah 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.4);" that is, if there were not one of my people whom they had not imprisoned or slain, the prisoners should come forth from their dungeons, and the slain should arise from their graves, to crush and to destroy them.

Indeed God assumes this as his very name whereby he is to be known, "The Lord is his name, that strengthens the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress, [Amos 5:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 5.8-9)."

It is with this view that the words of my text were uttered. The Assyrians threatened Jerusalem with an immense and irresistible army; and God comforted his people by an assurance, not only that their enemies should not prevail, but that they should flee, and leave an immense booty behind them; and that even "the lame among his people," who were scarcely able to walk, should yet go forth and "seize the spoil," and be enriched by it!

To mark the force of this expression, I will show,

***~~I. How this promise was fulfilled on the occasion referred to.~~***

So exceeding large and powerful was the Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem, that there seemed to be no hope of deliverance, but by means of some special interposition of God himself, [Isaiah 36:1-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 36.1-22). As for Hezekiah and his people, they seemed to be in the situation of a travailing woman, who, not having strength to deliver her child, was at the point of death, [Isaiah 37:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.1-3). But prayer was made by him and the Prophet Isaiah to the Lord; and "in one night an angel of the Lord slew no less than one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian army;" upon which the rest of the army retired in haste, leaving all their property behind them; so that all the people of Jerusalem, like Samaria on another occasion, were enriched by it, and the very weakest among them seized his portion of the prey, [Isaiah 37:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.4); [Isaiah 37:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 37.36-37).

Thus was the promise in my text literally fulfilled; and a pledge was given to the Church, that neither men nor devils should ever prevail against those who put their trust in Him!

The text, thus explained, may serve to show us, in a measure:

***~~II. How this promise is being fulfilled at this time.~~***

Still are the weak triumphant, through the power and grace of God.

***~~Are any weak in understanding?~~***

Do not fear; as deep as the mysteries of our holy religion are, and infinitely as they surpass the powers of unassisted reason to comprehend—you shall comprehend them, if you look to God for the teaching of his Spirit! Yes, "you shall comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19);" while the wise of this world shall "account them nothing but foolishness, [1 Corinthians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23)."

So it was with the poorer classes of the community in the days of our blessed Lord, "they heard his Word gladly," and received it thankfully; while the Scribes and Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves."

Thus it was also in the Apostle's days. Paul appealed to those at Corinth, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him! [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26-29)."

And to all who come to Christ for instruction, it is promised that their eyes shall be opened to see the truth, since God had determined that "the things which were hidden from the wise and prudent should be revealed unto babes, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)." Thus is provision made, even for the weakest, to guide them into all truth; and an assurance is given, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein! [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8)."

***~~Are any weak in grace?~~***

They need not despond; for "it is not the will of our Father that one of his little ones should perish! [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14)." "Christ will carry the Lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those who are with young! [Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11)." Weakness, if felt and deplored, shall never prevent the ultimate success of any soul whatever. *Indeed conscious weakness is, if I may so speak, a source of strength, since it will constrain a man to look unto Christ for strength*; and "Christ will perfect his own strength in his people's weakness." So true is that paradoxical expression of Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong! [2 Corinthians 12:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.8-10)."

When did we ever hear of one "who was plucked out of the Savior's hands [John 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28)." We are assured by the prophet, that, however violently God's people may be sifted, "not so much as the smallest grain shall ever fall to the earth, [Amos 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.9)." The weakest person in the universe shall "be able to do all things, through the strength of Christ, [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.13);" and however numerous his trials be, he shall be more than conqueror, through Him who loved him! [Romans 8:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.37)."

***~~Are any weak in faith?~~***

This is the most discouraging state of all; because a person strong in faith cannot fail of obtaining all that he can desire, [Matthew 21:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.22); whereas a person of a wavering and doubtful mind has but little reason to expect such ready communications as his necessities may require, [James 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.6-7). Still, however, if our faith is genuine, it shall prevail; and though it is only as a grain of mustard-seed—yet shall it enable its possessor to pluck up a mountain by its roots, and cast it into the sea! [Matthew 21:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.21). "To him who believes, nothing shall be impossible! [Matthew 17:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.20)."

And it is worthy of observation, that salvation is promised, not to him who is strong in faith, but to him who believes. Our commission from Christ himself is, to declare, without any reserve, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him! [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36)."

Thus, at this present time, is the text fulfilled to the least and weakest of God's people; not one of them, however lame, being so left as not ultimately to "take the prey."

But we are yet further to show,

***~~III. How this promise shall be fulfilled in the millennial age.~~***

To this period does the prophet apply the very same kind of language as that which I have already so copiously cited from him, "The LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors! [Isaiah 14:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.1-2)."

It seems impossible that the whole world of Jews and Gentiles should be so effectually converted, as to be turned to the worship of the true God, especially by such weak instruments as are now upon earth. But who spread our holy religion through the whole Roman Empire? A few poor fishermen! And what if the servants of God at this day be but few and weak—is not God able to work by them? Has he not even "put his treasure into earthen vessels, on purpose that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of Him, and not of us? [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.7)." How did the walls of Jericho fall, but by the sound of rams' horns? and how were the host of Midian vanquished, but by the breaking of Gideon's lamps, and the vociferation of a few dispersed men?

What effects, then, may we not expect from the preached Gospel at this day, if God be pleased to accompany it with his power from on high? It is as able at this day, as ever it was, to "cast down everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5;" and in God's good time it shall run and be glorified throughout the whole earth! [2 Thessalonians 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.1)."

Unbelief, viewing the world as dead in trespasses and sins, is ready to ask, "Can these dry bones live?" But, in answer to this, I say, Yes! They both can and shall live; and at the time when God, in answer to the prayers of his servants, shall be pleased to pour out his Spirit upon them, they shall not only resume the human form, but "shall live, and stand up on their feet, an exceeding great army! [Ezekiel 37:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.1-10)." "A nation shall be born in a day! [Isaiah 66:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.8);" and, by the simple preaching of a crucified Savior, "all the ends of the earth shall be brought to see the salvation of God! [Isaiah 52:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.10)."

***~~Behold then,~~***

***~~1. What great encouragement is here given to serve the Lord.~~***

No one need despond.*There is no mountain of guilt that cannot be removed by the blood of Christ! [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18). Nor is there any inveteracy of corruption that cannot be subdued by the Spirit of Christ! [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9).*Nor is there any confederacy, either of men or devils, that shall prevail to destroy the weakest saint upon the earth, [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18). "A worm shall thresh the mountains, and make them all like the dust of the summer threshing-floor, [Isaiah 41:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.14-15)."

But some, apprehending that there is something peculiar in their case, are ready to ask, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Yes! Thus says the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children! [Isaiah 49:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-25)." Be it known to all these, for their comfort, that "greater is he who is in them, than he who is in the world! [1 John 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.4);" and that "it is not by might or by power that anyone is to succeed, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty! [Zechariah 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6)."

***~~2. What great honor will be given to the Savior at the last day.~~***

*Once departed from this poor world, every true believer will regard himself as the most distinguished monument of mercy that is to be found in Heaven!* When a saint looks back, and sees with what powers he has conflicted, and yet come off victorious, O! what thanks will he render to the Captain of his salvation, through whom alone he was enabled to maintain the conflict! and what songs of praise will he pour forth to God and to the Lamb forever!

It was in proud self-confidence that the Jebusites defied David, saying, that "except he should take away the blind and the lame, (whom, if there were no others, they supposed capable of defending their impregnable fortress against him,) he should not come within their city, [2 Samuel 5:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 5.6-8). But it is in dependence on Christ that we defy all our enemies, and say without fear, that "the blind and the lame shall repel them all." "His is the kingdom, and his the power; and his shall be the glory, forever and ever!"

***~~#912~~***

***~~GLORIOUS PROSPECTS OF THE GOSPEL CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2)~~***

KJV. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God"

NIV. "The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God!"

As the planting of the Jews in Canaan was accompanied with the slaughter of the Canaanites, so in every age the establishment of God's Church on earth is represented as immediately connected with, and in a measure consequent upon, the judgments inflicted on her enemies.

This appears, as in many other places, so especially from the words of our text; which are a continuation of the prophecy contained in the preceding chapter, or rather, a transition from one part of the subject to another part of the same subject.

In the foregoing chapter, the destruction of the Edomites was predicted, as introductory to the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. But the devastation of their country by Nebuchadnezzar did not by any means correspond with the strong expressions used to describe it; nor did the reformation under Hezekiah at all answer to the exalted terms in which the prosperity of Zion is set forth.

*The true sense of the passage must be found in events yet future*. Edom is here considered as a type of all the Church's enemies, which at some future period will be fearfully destroyed; and then will the Church be enlarged and prosper, in a way that has never yet been seen upon earth. "For them," that is, for those judgments before spoken of, "will the wilderness and the solitary place be glad," because they will open a way for the accomplishment of God's gracious designs towards his Church and people.

The words, as thus explained, lead us naturally to contemplate,

***~~I. The state of people and places unenlightened by the Gospel.~~***

***~~Whatever advantages any place may possess, it is, if destitute of the Gospel, a dreary wilderness.~~***

Let us suppose a place in point of beauty and fertility like Paradise itself; let it be the seat of arts and sciences, the emporium of commerce, the center of civilized and polished society; let it abound with everything that can amuse the mind, or gratify the taste—still, What is it without the Gospel?

What does it afford that can nourish an immortal soul?

No heavenly manna is found there;  
no wells of salvation are open to the thirsty traveler;  
none are at hand to point out the way to eternal life.

Its only produce is thorns and briers, which *entangle*, and *impede*, and *wound*us—every step we take. And on every side are snares and temptations, which, like fierce animals, lie in wait for us, ever ready to accomplish our eternal ruin!

The cities of Athens and of Rome must in this respect be viewed on a level with the most desolate spots upon the globe; for, whatever they might furnish for the edification or comfort of the carnal mind, they would afford no nutriment to him who was perishing for lack of spiritual food.

***~~The same observations we must make in relation to the souls of men.~~***

Whatever strength of intellect a man may possess, or however deeply he may be versed in every branch of human learning; whatever amiable qualities he may have to distinguish him from others; yes, whatever actual enjoyment he may receive from the riches, the honors, the pleasures of the world—yet his soul is "a wilderness," "a solitude," "a desert!" God is not there; the fruits of the Spirit are not found there; no heavenly consolations are ever tasted by him; he is without a track, without a guide, without a shelter in the day of trouble, and without any other prospect than that of falling a prey to enemies, or perishing with hunger.

The unenlightened soul is compared by Jeremiah, not to a desert merely, but to "a *heath*in a desert, where no good ever comes, [Jeremiah 17:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5-6)." O that those who imagine themselves "rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing—were made sensible how wretched they are, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! [Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17)."

Let us turn from this humiliating contemplation, to consider,

***~~II. The state to which they are brought by the Gospel.~~***

Beautiful is the description given by the prophet of the change that is wrought by the Gospel of Christ. The souls of men assume altogether a new aspect.

***~~In the true believer is found the beauty of the rose.~~***

Where there was but lately no appearance of life, now there arises:  
a holy desire after God,  
a delight in heavenly exercises,  
a love to the people of the Lord, and  
an ambition to resemble God in righteousness and true holiness.

First, but a blossom appears; but gradually the rising foliage bursts from its confinement, and expands itself to the eyes of all, diffusing fragrance all around it. The believer, blessed in himself, makes the very place of his residence a blessing; according to that description given of him by the Prophet Ezekiel, "I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings, [Ezekiel 34:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.26)."

Thus by the power of his Gospel, "the Lord comforts Zion! he comforts all her waste places; he makes her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness are found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody! [Isaiah 51:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.3)."

**In the true believer is found the stability of the cedar.**

The woods of Lebanon were proverbially grand; its cedars and its pines grew up to Heaven, and defied all the storms with which they could be assailed. This was "the glory of Lebanon;" and this glory shall be given to all who are "rooted and grounded in the Lord."

As weak as the beginnings of grace are in the believer's soul, he shall "shoot forth his roots as Lebanon," and become "a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3)." Storms and tempests will beat upon him; but they shall only cause him to take deeper root, and to evince more clearly, in the sight of all men, that "God's strength is perfected in his people's weakness, 2 Corinthians 12:9." In like manner shall the Church at large be kept; and "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

***~~In the true believer is found the fruitfulness of the richest pastures.~~***

Carmel and Sharon were famous for their pasturage and flocks; such excellency shall be seen wherever the Gospel is preached with life and power. How precious are the ordinances made! What pastures are laid open in the Word of God! How strengthening and refreshing does that feast become, which the Lord Jesus Christ has prepared for us at his table! The souls, thus richly fed, "grow up as calves of the stall;" the trees, thus watered by "the river of God," abound in all manner of fruits, even in "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God." Contemplate every "fruit of the Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.22-23);" and that is what is produced by "every plant which God's right hand has planted."

***~~Unutterable joy as the result of all.~~***

The expressions in our text fitly characterize the state of those who are brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Gospel; they "are glad, and rejoice, and blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing." Let anyone who has ever beheld a desert brought by cultivation to a fruitful field, and seen it "standing so thick with corn as to laugh and sing;" let him contemplate it awhile; and he will have a faint image, though a very faint one, of "a wilderness" place or person that is "made to blossom as the rose." O that we might behold the picture realized in this place, and that every one among us might have the image of it in his own soul!

But it is necessary that we should draw your attention to,

***~~III. That particular view of the Gospel by which these effects are wrought.~~***

It is not by a mutilated and perverted Gospel that these effects are produced, but by a simple exhibition of Christ crucified, and of the attributes of God as united and harmonizing in the work of Redemption.

***~~To this it is uniformly ascribed in the Word of God.~~***

Look at the prophets, and you will find it is "the glory of the Lord" that they speak of, as revealed to men by the Gospel, and as seen by men in their conversion, [Psalm 102:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.16). [Isaiah 60:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1-2); [Isaiah 40:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.5) and [Psalm 97:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 97.6). [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14).

Look at the Apostles, and the same truth is attested by them all; insomuch that they all "determined to know nothing in their ministrations, but Jesus Christ and him crucified." The one object which they sought by all possible means to attain, was, so to preach, that "God might shine into his people's hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6);" and until they saw "Christ formed in them," they were satisfied with no change however great, no profession however confident, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19). The commission given to them all, was to "say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! [Isaiah 40:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.9)." And this they all fulfilled, saying to their people from time to time, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [John 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.29)."

To this also must the effect be traced in the experience of all genuine believers.

Who that hears a perverted Gospel, is ever brought effectually to God by it? We may represent the Gospel as a kind of remedial law, that supersedes the necessity of perfect obedience, and requires only sincere obedience in its stead. Or we may represent the Gospel as proposing a salvation partly by Christ's righteousness, and partly by our own; but we shall never see such effects produced as are described in our text. Let this matter be scrutinized; and the more it is scrutinized, the more the truth of it will be confirmed.

It is obvious, that in some people, and some places, a great change is wrought; and it will be found to be owing to this one thing, that "Christ is preached," and he is received into the heart as "All in all! [Colossians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.11)." The people are made to "see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God;" and therefore they rejoice and consecrate themselves to the service of their God and Savior.

Hence also is their stability; for they would rather die a thousand deaths, than renounce their hope in Him; and hence also their fertility, for they think they can never do enough for him, who has done and suffered such things for them. And this is expressly declared by the Apostle, "We, beholding as in a looking-glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

***~~Observe,~~***

**1. What encouragement is here for those who minister in holy things.**

Ministers, especially when invited to labor among unenlightened heathen, are apt to draw back, under an idea that they can never hope to reap a crop in such a soil. But if God has promised that "the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," why should we despond? Is not his Word as living and powerful as ever? and can he not, by whoever, or to whoever it is delivered, make it "sharper than any two-edged sword," so that it shall be "the power of God to the salvation of men?" Only let "his Spirit be poured out from on high, and the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest! [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15)." Though the corn be but a handful, and cast on the summit of a barren mountain, its produce shall be great, and your harvest sure, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16).

***~~2. What encouragement also for those who are dejected on account of the state of their own souls.~~***

When all your grounds of dejection are stated, they amount to no more than this, that your hearts are a very "desert." But "God's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear." Possibly you may feel additional ground of despondency, because you have backslidden from the Lord, and therefore fear that he will give you up to final impenitence. If so, then plead with him that promise which is made to people in your very condition; and rest assured, that he will fulfill it to you, if you trust in him, [Hosea 14:4-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.4-7). You may wait long, as the gardener does, for the fruit of your labor; but you shall not wait in vain! [James 5:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.7-8).

***~~#913~~***

***~~ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE WEAK~~***

***~~[Isaiah 35:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.3-4)~~***

KJV. "Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, do not fear; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you."

NIV. "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you!"

Our blessed Lord, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, has set an example to all of his ministers, how to watch over their flock, [Ezekiel 34:11-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.11-16). [Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11). And in the words before us he gives them special direction how to treat the weak and the diseased.

***~~I. Consider the characters here described.~~***

Among the people of God, all of whom are weak as sheep, there are many that, from their peculiar weakness and infirmities, are characterized rather as "lambs, or as sheep that are big with young." These are described in the text,

**1. As feeling their weakness.**

The "hands and feet" being those members of the body that are fitted for labor, may properly represent the active powers of the soul; and the feebleness which they experience through excessive fatigue, gives us a just idea of a soul weary with its labors, and heavy laden with its spiritual burdens.

Many there are that are precisely in this state:  
they have been maintaining a conflict with sin and Satan;  
they have been enduring the pressure of many trials;  
and they scarcely know how to support their difficulties any longer. Their "hands are so weak and their knees so feeble," that they are ready to give up in utter despair. This is illustrated by David's case, [Psalm 38:2-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.2-8); [Psalm 38:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.17).

***~~2. As discouraged by reason of it.~~***

Many are the misgiving thoughts that arise in the minds of God's tempted people. When they find their insufficiency to support their burdens, and to overcome their spiritual enemies, they have "great searchings of heart;" they begin to doubt whether they have not altogether deceived their own souls; and whether they may not as well cease from those contests which they have hitherto found so ineffectual. They fear that God has cast them off; that all their professions are mere hypocrisy; and that their renewed exertions will only issue in their greater disappointment, [Psalm 77:2-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.2-9).

If there are any present, whose experience accords with this description, we proceed to,

***~~II. Deliver to them a message from the most high God.~~***

God would not ever have his ministers "break a bruised reed," or "despise the day of small things." On the contrary, he says, "Comfort! Comfort my people!" "Strengthen the weak hands, and steady the feeble knees." But, because we should be at a loss to know what to say, and all that we could say would be to no purpose, if it were the mere offspring of our own imaginations, God himself has put words into our mouths; which therefore we may safely, and confidently, deliver.

Let the drooping and disconsolate now listen as to the voice of God himself; for it is God, and not man, who thus audibly speaks unto them.

"Be strong, do not fear!" This may appear a strange address to those who feel within themselves such reason for despondency; but it is God's message to them; and therefore in God's name we deliver it.

But in the text the grounds of this encouragement are stated; and, if duly applied to the soul, they are sufficient to comfort the most distressed, and to invigorate the weakest. "Behold then, your God will come;" yes, that God who, notwithstanding all your fears, is, and will be, your God! Think what is implied in this relation, and then say, whether you have not in this Word alone *an inexhaustible fund of consolation*.

He will come "with vengeance" to your enemies, and "with a recompense" to you. He sees with indignation those evil spirits that assault you, and those ungodly men that despise and persecute you, and all those indwelling lusts that harass and defile you; and he has doomed them all to destruction; your lusts, by the operation of his grace, and your enemies, whether men or devils, by his avenging arm.

But with respect to yourselves, there is not a tear, which he has not treasured up in his vial! [Psalm 56:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.8).

Nor is there a sigh or a groan, [Psalm 38:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.8-9),  
nor a purpose, [1 Kings 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 8.18),  
nor a wish, [1 Kings 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 14.13),  
nor a thought, [Malachi 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.16),  
which he has not *noted in the book of his remembrance*, in order to recompense it at the resurrection of the just!

In short, "he will come and save you." He is interested in your welfare; and allows you to be thus tried, and tempted, only for your good, [1 Peter 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.6). He knows "when your strength is gone," and will make your extremity the season of his effectual interposition, [Deuteronomy 32:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.36).

Notice the repetitions in this message; for they surely were not inserted for nothing. It is "God, even God," that will come for your relief; it is not a *man*, or an *angel*—but *Jehovah himself*, to whom all things are alike possible, and alike easy. Moreover, it is said, "He will come, he will come;" you need not doubt it, for it is as certain as that he himself exists. He may tarry long; but wait his leisure; and he will come at last, [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.3) with [2 Chronicles 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 15.7).

***~~Inferences:~~***

***~~1. How anxious is God for the comfort of his people!~~***

He charges all his ministers to exert themselves for the relief of his people's minds; and expressly sends them a message of love and mercy under their multiplied afflictions. And lest they should put away from them the word, as not applicable to themselves, he describes them, not by their attainments, but by their defects; not by their hopes, but by their fears. He describes them by the very terms which they themselves make use of to describe their own state. What marvelous condescension is this!

Moreover, he sends them exactly such a message as they themselves would desire, if they were commissioned to declare beforehand what they would consider as an adequate ground of consolation. Can anything exceed this kindness?

*Let us never entertain unworthy conceptions of our gracious God; nor ever doubt his love, nor ever distrust his care.* And, instead of distressing ourselves with fears on account of our own weakness, let us look unto our Almighty Savior to "perfect his own strength by means of it! [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)."

***~~2. How differently must ministers conduct themselves towards the different objects of their care!~~***

That same divine Shepherd who says, "I will strengthen those who are sick," adds, "But I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment! [Ezekiel 34:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.16)."

Now there are many who perhaps will bless themselves, that they are strangers to the faintings and fears which are so distressing to others. What message then have we from God to them? Shall we endeavor to "confirm and strengthen" them? They need not our assistance; they would despise our offered help. Shall we say to them, "Be strong, do not fear?" Alas! how "shall they be strong in the day that God shall deal with them! [Ezekiel 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 22.14) and [Isaiah 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.3)." They rather need to fear and tremble for the judgments that are coming upon them. "God is coming;" but he is not their God; for they have never chosen him for their God, nor given themselves up to him as his people. He is coming with awful "vengeance," and with a just "recompense" for all their neglect of him. He is coming not to "save," but to destroy them! Let them then hear the message of God to them, [2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.7-9), and tremble! They must be *sick*in order to know the value of a physician; and must feel themselves *lost*, if ever they would be savingly interested in the salvation of Christ, [Mark 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 2.17). [Luke 18:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.13-14).

***~~#914~~***

***~~STREAMS IN THE DESERT~~***

***~~[Isaiah 35:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.5-7)~~***

KJV. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackels, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes."

NIV. "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow!"

*Though the truths which we have to proclaim lie in a very small compass—yet do they admit of an endless diversity of illustration; so that, though old and well known, they appear ever new*.

The figure under which the Gospel is here set forth is indeed frequently used in the Holy Scriptures; and well it may be, since it is peculiarly adapted to bring home to our very senses, as it were, the nature and operation of the Gospel, and to display its energy visibly before our eyes. We can conceive of a desert converted into a fertile garden; and we can form some idea of the multitudes who were healed of all manner of diseases by our blessed Lord. And under these images the Gospel is here exhibited to our view. In the words before us, we are led to contemplate,

***~~I. Its miraculous establishment.~~***

***~~A desert is but too just a picture of the world at large.~~***

In this country we have a very faint notion of a desert. In some parts of the world there are large tracts of country perfectly sterile, consisting only of burning sands, in which nothing will grow; and these are infested with all manner of fierce animals. Now certainly this appears, at first sight, to be a very exaggerated representation of human nature; and surely it would be so, if we only took into the account man's conduct towards his fellow-man. For it must be confessed, and we bless God for it, that man is not so fallen, but that there yet remain within him many traits of his original worth and excellency. Benevolence, integrity, a sense of honor, a feeling of compassion, are by no means eradicated from every bosom; though, through the violence of temptation, they do not operate so extensively or so uniformly as they ought; and in many people, through *habits of wickedness*, they are almost wholly effaced.

*But towards God there remains in us nothing that is truly and properly good.* We are in this respect all upon a level; we all, without exception, are alike alienated from the life of God, without one spiritual affection towards him. To please God, to serve him, to honor him, we have no purpose, no desire whatever. Self has altogether usurped his throne, and is the only object of our solicitude; and if only self may be advanced and gratified, we are content to forget God, and to live "without him in the world."

Thus, considering a desert to be a place destitute of all good, and full of all evil, we may, so far as our state before God is concerned, consider it as a just picture of our fallen condition.

***~~But by the Gospel a wonderful change is effected in us.~~***

Conceive of such a desert, as has been described, being, by the almighty power of God, filled at once with springs and rivers, and verdant hills and valleys; conceive of it as freed from all its venomous inhabitants, and covered with flocks and herds for the use of man; and then you will have some idea of what is wrought by the Gospel, wherever it is established.

Let the day of Pentecost serve as a specimen. Certainly, if ever there were incarnate fiends, such were the great mass of those who put our blessed Lord to death. But see the change wrought on thousands of them in one hour! It would be deemed incredible, if we did not know that such was really the fact, "the Holy Spirit then poured out," in confirmation of the Apostle's word, "turned at once the wilderness into a fruitful field, so that the fruitful field might be counted for a forest, [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15)."

What takes place at this day, upon a smaller scale, is not so visible, or so well authenticated, as that to which we have referred; but it is altogether of the same character; for when once "the waters break out in the wilderness, and the streams in the desert, the parched ground becomes a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; and in the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow!" Vegetation and beauty supplying the place of sterile deformity.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that this must be the work of God alone. It far exceeds the power of man. It was the work of Omnipotence in the apostolic age; and, as such, it is here promised to be extended over the face of the whole earth. Jerusalem was indeed the primary seat of this glorious change; but it is to be extended, as the Lord has said, "Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song, for the LORD has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD has demonstrated his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God! [Isaiah 52:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.9-10)."

In accordance with this change, will be found:

***~~II. Its characteristic benefits.~~***

At the introduction of Christianity, many glorious miracles were wrought by our blessed Lord, in confirmation of his Word. These were predicted in the passage before us; and to these did our blessed Lord appeal, in proof of his divine mission. "When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor! [Matthew 11:2-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.2-5)." But it is in a spiritual sense, chiefly, that these blessed effects are to be wrought. In a general view these have been already described; but now we must notice them under a different image, and with a more minute attention to circumstances.

***~~In all our faculties, and in all our powers, we are fallen.~~***

It is worthy of observation, that, for the elucidation of this point, Paul collects a number of unconnected passages from the Old Testament, and strings them, as it were, all together, in order that, by their accumulated weight, they may bear down all opposition to his argument; which is, to prove that "men are all gone out of the way, and that there is none that does good—no, not one." "Their mouth," says he, "is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, [Romans 3:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.12-15)."

Thus, in my text, it is intimated:  
that men's eyes are by nature shut against the light of divine truth;  
that their ears are deaf to the voice of God in his Word;  
that their feet never move in the service of their God;  
and that their tongues are never employed in his praise.

A very little acquaintance with what is passing in the world around us, or in our own hearts, will suffice to confirm this melancholy description. So true it is, that all of us, even every man, are "gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that does good—no, not one! [Psalm 53:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 53.3)."

***~~But in all these respects, through the Gospel of Christ, we are renewed.~~***

By the preached Gospel, when accompanied with the Spirit of God, "the eyes of the blind are opened;" so that, with different measures of clearness, they "see the things that are invisible" to mortal eyes—even the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness, and "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

By it, too, "the ears of the deaf are unstopped; so that they hear "the still small voice" of God to them, whispering peace to their souls, and "saying unto them, This is the way; walk in it."

By it, also, "the feet of the lame man are made to leap as an deer;" so that they not only walk, but "run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged hearts."

Lastly, by it is "the tongue of the mute made to sing the praises of Jehovah," and to anticipate, amidst all the troubles of this earthly state, the felicity of Heaven.

Now this is not a poetic fiction, but a plain and undeniable reality. This is the state of men wherever the Gospel of Christ produces its proper and legitimate effects. It is not among the rich only or the poor, the old or the young, that it operates in this way, but in people of every age and every class. Wherever it is preached, "with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven," there it is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and becomes to multitudes the power of God to the salvation of their souls.

*The miracles wrought by our blessed Lord were but a shadow of what is wrought, and shall be wrought, by the preached Gospel!* I thank God that there are millions this day upon earth who can bear witness to this blessed truth, that, in their own actual experience, they are become altogether "new creatures; old things having passed away, and all things being become new."

***~~Observe then, from hence,~~***

***~~1. What little reason any person has to despond.~~***

Can anyone conceive himself to be in a worse state than that of a desert, destitute of all good, and filled with everything that is of the most malignant quality?

Or, if he takes humanity for his standard, can he conceive of himself as in a more deplorable condition than one blind, and deaf, and lame, and mute? Yet these are the maladies which the Gospel is sent especially to relieve. It does not merely suffice for these things; but it is the prescribed remedy, which never did, nor ever can, fail.

Instead therefore of being discouraged by any sense that we have of our own extreme want and wretchedness, we should take occasion, from our very necessities, to glorify God, and to enlarge our expectations of relief from him; assured, that "his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness," and his grace be magnified in our unworthiness!

***~~2. What glorious prospects are before us.~~***

We believe that these wonderful changes shall take place in God's appointed time, and that "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." The change from the dreary barrenness of winter to the verdure and fertility of spring, is pleasing to the sight. But, oh! what is it to see a place, where Christ was neither known nor thought of, filled with people displaying in their souls all the wonderful operations of his grace! And what must it be, to behold those scenes spreading from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, until "the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!"

Well, certain it is, that this blessed period is fast approaching; and that "God will comfort, not Zion only, but all the waste places of the earth; making her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; so that in every place shall joy and gladness be found, and nothing be heard but thanksgiving and the voice of melody! [Isaiah 51:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.3)."

Let us look forward to this time; yes, let us help it forward to the utmost of our power; and if, but in a single instance, the blind, or deaf, or lame, or mute, receive the relief which they stand in need of, we shall have no reason to complain that we have run in vain, or labored in vain.

***~~3. What ground for gratitude has every believing soul.~~***

Who is it that has made you to differ from others?

Who is it that has healed the maladies of your souls, or that has made "your wilderness soul to blossom as the rose?"

This, as we have before said, is the work of God, and of God alone, "He who has wrought us to the self-same thing, is God." And is this no call for gratitude?

Look at heathen lands, and see their people bowing down to stocks and stones. Or look nearer home, and see the multitudes around you as unaffected with the Gospel as if it had never visited this highly-favored country. Perhaps your nearest and dearest relatives are at this moment, in respect of spiritual things, as barren as the most dreary desert, and as destitute of perception as if they had never possessed the organs of sight and hearing. Learn to pity and to pray for them, while your souls are transported with joy and gratitude for the mercies given to you. And now *show, by your fruits, what a change has been wrought within you, and, by the devotion of all your faculties to God, the healing virtue which you have received.*

***~~#915~~***

***~~THE WAY TO ZION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 35:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.8-10)~~***

KJV. "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the impure shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and coma to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

NIV. "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away!"

In the volume of inspiration, the progress of the Gospel in the apostolic and millennial periods is often set forth as a counterpart of the redemption of Israel from the land of Egypt. The power effecting the conversion of men, and all the blessings attending it, are described in terms precisely similar to those which, in their literal sense, are applicable only to the deliverance of the Hebrews from their Egyptian bondage. The power exerted for its accomplishment is the same, as are also the blessings attendant on it.

The Prophet Isaiah speaking of that day when Christ, "the root of Jesse, shall stand for an ensign, to which the Gentiles shall seek," says, "the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt, [Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10); [Isaiah 11:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.15-16) and [Micah 7:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.15)." It is of the same periods, and the same events, that he speaks in the chapter before us, and especially in the words of our test; wherein he describes:

***~~I. The way which is prepared for the redeemed to walk in.~~***

As strange as it may appear, the text itself, if not taken in connection with other passages, may give us an erroneous notion respecting the way of life and salvation. The way is called, and justly called, "The way of holiness;" but we are not therefore to suppose that there is nothing necessary for our salvation but the performance of some good works; for the same prophet, who in our text calls the way to Zion "The way of holiness," tells us more fully, in another place, that it is the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, [Isaiah 62:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.10-12). To mark this, and to bear it ever in mind, is of great importance and indispensable necessity; since our Lord Jesus Christ himself assures us, that "He is the way, the truth, and the life; and that no man comes to the Father but by him! [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)."

Bearing this then in mind, that the way to Heaven is solely by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9), we observe respecting it, that it is:

***~~1. A high and holy way.~~***

As, in forming a highway, the stones are cast up, and the road is made above the level of the adjacent ground, so is this way far above the low and groveling paths which are trodden by the world around us; and those who walk in it are walking comparatively "in the high places of the earth." Raised above the miry clay of sin, it is a holy path; the faith itself is a "most holy faith, Jude verse 20;" and those who are brought to it, are "called with a holy calling, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9)," and are themselves "a holy nation, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)," "a special people, zealous of good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)."

People who are ignorant of the Gospel, are ready to suppose that the doctrine of salvation by faith only must be injurious to the interests of morality; but the very reverse of this is true; for they, and they only, who look to Christ for salvation, have either will or power to fulfill the high demands of the Gospel; they, and they only, desire to be "sanctified throughout, in body, soul, and spirit, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23);" and that is the holiness which alone is acceptable in the sight of God, [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.14).

No latitude is allowed to any man; there is the same law for all; and every statute, every ordinance, every injunction in the whole Gospel has the same tendency to make us holy; the more the laws and regulations of Christ's family are scrutinized, the more it will appear, that "This is the law of the house; behold, this is the law of the house, [Ezekiel 43:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 43.12)."

***~~2. A strait and narrow way.~~***

It is "not for the impure, but for the redeemed alone."

Not that there is any prohibition to any man to walk in it; but *the ungodly have no inclination to walk in it; the work of mortification and self-denial is distasteful to them; nor have they any root in themselves from whence the fruits of the Spirit can proceed*.

But to the redeemed the whole work of holiness is delightful; it is the very element they delight to move in; so far from wishing to be left at liberty to commit any sin, they would gladly "have every thought of their heart brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, [2 Corinthians 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.5)." They consider holiness as the very end of their new creation, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10), yes, the very end also for which they were elected, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4), and to which they were predestined from all eternity, [Romans 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.29); and, if they could have the desire of their hearts, they would "be holy, as God himself is holy, [1 Peter 1:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.15-16)," and "pure, as God himself is pure, 1 [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.3)." Justly therefore is it said by our Lord, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there are who find it! [Matthew 7:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.13-14)."

***~~3. A plain and obvious way.~~***

To those who have no experience of its power, the Gospel, both in its doctrines and precepts, is altogether foolishness, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14); but it is so only because they are ignorant of its real nature; they are blinded by Satan and their own lusts! [2 Corinthians 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.3-4). And, like the Syrian host, they imagine that they are journeying to the heavenly city, when in truth they are going into the heart of an enemy's country, even to the regions of darkness and despair! [2 Kings 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 6.19). But "what God has hidden from the wise and prudent, he has revealed unto babes, [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25);" and to those whose eyes he has opened, the way is clear as the light itself. "The knowledge of it is easy to him who understands, [Proverbs 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 14.6);" for a light shines upon it; and "the Angel of the Covenant goes before them in the way, to lead them to the city prepared for them, [Exodus 23:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 23.20)."

Thus "darkness is made light before them, and crooked things straight, [Isaiah 42:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.16);" and if at any time they are perplexed with any important doubts, they need only look up to God, and they hear a word behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk in it;" by which they are kept from "turning either to the right hand or to the left! [Isaiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.21)."

Nor is this the privilege of the learned only, but of all, even the lowest and the least, seeing "they have an anointing of the Holy One that teaches them all things, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27);" and so direct is their way made, "that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Of course, we must not be understood to say, that any person is infallible; but this we do and must affirm, that none, however weak, shall be left to mistake the path to Heaven, since God has pledged himself to us, that "the meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way, [Psalm 25:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.8-9)."

***~~4. A safe and secure way.~~***

It is probable that the strong expressions in our text may refer more particularly to the millennial state; for they exactly agree with what the Prophet Ezekiel has manifestly spoken with an immediate reference to that day, [Ezekiel 34:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.24-25). But they are true to a certain extent in every age; for though there are lions, and, above all, that "roaring lion, the devil, seeking to devour us," they are all either chained, that they cannot reach us—or restrained, that they cannot hurt us! [Daniel 6:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.22) with [Psalm 76:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 76.10). Though therefore "the redeemed" appear an easy prey to their enemies, they walk at large without any anxious fear. By faith "they see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about them, [2 Kings 6:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 6.15-17);" and they know that "they could have legions of angels sent to them, [Matthew 26:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.53)," at their request, if they stood in need of their protection. They are sensible indeed of the number, the power, and the malice of their enemies! But as people traveling through places infested by wild beasts make a fire round them and are secure, so they feel themselves secure, because "God himself is a wall of fire round about them, and their glory in the midst of them, [Zechariah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.5)."

Such is the way to Zion; and O that God by his Holy Spirit may draw us, while we declare,

***~~II. The happiness of those who journey in it!~~***

"Happy indeed are you, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)." Thrice happy are they who walk in his ways!

***~~1. Inexpressibly happy are they throughout all their journey.~~***

Did Israel, when redeemed from Egypt, sing praises to their God? [Exodus 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.1). Then much more happy are those who are redeemed from death and Hell; as soon as ever they are "brought out of the horrible pit, and have set their feet upon the King's highway, there is a new song put into their mouth, even praise unto our God, [Psalm 40:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.2-3)." It is true they are represented by the prophet, even "the whole company of them, the blind and the lame, the women with child, and she that travails with child together, as coming with weeping and with supplication, [Jeremiah 31:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.8-9);" but this is so far from destroying their joy, that it is the very root from which it springs, the seed from which the harvest of joy proceeds! [Psalm 126:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 126.5-6).

There is in the weeping of a real penitent, a holy tenderness, which is no less grateful to his soul than the livelier ebullitions of joy itself; yes, so deeply does he feel his own unworthiness, that he would not wish to "rejoice, but with trembling; nor, if he were transported to Heaven itself, would he so exult, as to forget to cast his crown before the Savior's feet! [Revelation 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.10)."

Indeed this very mixture of sincere shame with triumphant exultation is intimated by the Prophet Jeremiah, who, immediately after representing the saints as "weeping," proceeds to paint their happiness as most sublime, not only on account of the deliverance they have experienced, but on account of the continued communications of all spiritual blessings to their souls, [Jeremiah 31:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.11-14). See also 33:11. And well may we expect them to "return with singing,"*when they consider from what hellish paths they have been brought, and to what a glorious state they are "coming;" and, above all, by what a price they have been ransomed, even by the blood of God's only dear Son*. Had they been "redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold," they could not but rejoice; but having been ransomed "by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19)," they are filled with wonder; and are ready almost to account it all a dream, [Psalm 126:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 126.1-2); like Peter, who, when delivered from prison, could scarcely credit his deliverance, but "thought he saw a vision, [Acts 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.9)."

Doubtless this joyous frame does not exist in all alike, nor in any equally at all times; their remaining infirmities are sometimes called forth to the wounding of their consciences, and the clouding of their souls. Even Paul himself sometimes cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" But still, by renewed applications of the blood of Christ to their souls, their consciences are purged from guilt, and their joy in the Lord is revived.

Thus, while they go through the valley of Baca, they find wells of salvation, from which they draw water with joy, and are refreshed; and thus they go on from strength to strength, until they appear before God in Zion! [Psalm 84:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.6-7).

***~~2. Inexpressibly happy are they at their journey's end.~~***

It has been just observed, that "sighing and sorrow" occasionally interrupt the believer's joy; and indeed they follow him at a greater or less distance all his journey through; but when once he arrives at the gate of Heaven, those blessed inhabitants, "joy and gladness," come forth to meet him; and "sorrow and sighing flee away!" Then is his joy uninterrupted and unmixed; for he is introduced into "the presence of his God, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasure for evermore." Could we but get a glimpse of him in those sacred mansions, could we behold the raptures with which he tunes his harp to the praises of his God and Savior—truly, we should proclaim him blessed beyond all expression or conception. Let us then look into Heaven; (for so it is permitted to us;) and let us listen to his voice. Methinks we hear the full chorus of the redeemed, singing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing! [Revelation 5:9-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.9-13)."

And if we inquire concerning them, "Who they are? and Whence they came?" we shall be informed distinctly, not that they were innocent in themselves, or had done to many good works, but, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God!"

*That which constitutes a great measure of their happiness is, an inward consciousness that it shall continue forever without any mixture, intermission, or end!* "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes! [Revelation 7:9-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9-17)." What an amazing change is this, even from the best state that can be enjoyed here below! Well may it be said, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord;" for, while everything painful has forever passed away, [Revelation 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.13) with 21:4, they are unceasingly occupied in the immediate vision and complete fruition of their God!

***~~Exhortation.~~***

Permit me now to address myself to every individual among you. "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you. Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel, [Numbers 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 10.29). See also [Micah 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 4.2)."

**Consider, what a blessed way it is**; it is "the good old way, [Jeremiah 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 6.16), wherein the Prophets and Apostles walked; yes, and wherein our blessed Lord himself walked, "leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps, [1 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.21). [1 John 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.6)." What way can the world point out that is comparable to this?

**Think too of the end to which it leads**; shall not this thought engage you to come with us; and not only to begin with zeal, but also to "run with patience, the race that is set before you!" As for you who have commenced your journey heavenward, lift up your hearts to God, that he would enable you to "hold on your way, [Job 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 17.9)," and "so to run that you may obtain the prize, [1 Corinthians 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.9)." Pray that you may never be weary, never halt, never turn back; but that your course may be uniformly holy; or rather, that "your light may shine more and more unto the perfect day! [Proverbs 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.18)."

***~~#916~~***

***~~HELP FOR US IN GOD ALONE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 38:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.14)~~***

KJV. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me!"

NIV. "I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!"

The time of death is a solemn season to every man; but it may be more or less terrible, according to circumstances.

There may, in that hour, be such manifestations of God's presence given to the soul, and such bright prospects of a glorious immortality, as altogether to divest death of its sting, and to render it an object of intense desire.

On the other hand, there may be such darkness of mind, or anguish of body, or such urgent considerations of a personal or domestic nature, as may exceedingly embitter the thoughts of approaching dissolution.

The account which we have of Hezekiah's feelings on an occasion like this, fills us with deep commiseration. His disorder was so violent, that he expected every day to be his last; and God seemed to him like a lion, likely to break all his bones, and to devour him every instant. Hence "he mourned as a dove; and his eyes failed with looking upward;" and in utter despair of help, except from God, he poured out the prayer which we have just read, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me!"

There were in his case some peculiar reasons for supplicating with more than common earnestness the impending stroke; for he was but in the middle age of life; and hoped to proceed with the work of reformation which he had successfully commenced through the whole nation. In the event of his removal too, he had no son to succeed him; and he feared that the people, just beginning to return to the Lord their God, would immediately relapse into all the idolatries, from which he had strenuously exerted himself to reclaim them. To this chiefly we trace the extreme desire which he expressed for the prolongation of his life, and the overwhelming agony with which, in the words before us, he committed his cause to God.

Here we see:

***~~I. The privilege of God's people in seasons of deep distress.~~***

***~~They are at liberty to commit their every concern to God.~~***

Of whatever kind our trials may be, we may spread them all before our merciful Father, with a confidence that He will afford us the wisest relief. We may cast all our cares on God Himself, in an assured hope that He will undertake for us, and take upon Himself the entire charge of all our concerns. We may commit to Him . . .  
the directing of our path,  
the supplying of our needs,  
and the keeping of our souls,  
not doubting but that, as our Creator, our Governor, and our Redeemer, He will be faithful to His own engagements, and execute for us whatever in His unerring wisdom He sees best for us.

***~~This is our most inestimable privilege!~~***

We are not left to bear their burdens alone. Our daily experience shows us how unable any of us are, of ourselves, to bear up under the various trials of life. But we have a God to go unto—a God who says, "Cast your burden upon Me, and I will sustain you."

If "help were not laid upon One that is mighty," upon One who says to us, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—then what hope could any of us have?

But with such a *Refuge*, and such a *Friend*—we may well be satisfied; for He is both a sun to enlighten us, and a shield to protect us! He will give us both grace and glory! No good thing, either in time or in eternity, will He withhold from us—if we humbly and sincerely commit our cause to Him!

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need!" [Hebrews 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.16)

In Hezekiah's use of this privilege, we see,

***~~II. The success that shall attend the exercise of it.~~***

It is of little importance to inquire how far the application of a fig to Hezekiah's boil was an appropriate remedy for his disorder. Whatever its operation was, it was God alone that rendered it effectual; and the same divine power can give success to any means which shall be used for our good, either in a temporal or spiritual view.

The greatness of our danger is no bar to God's interposition. All that he wants is the prayer of faith; and that once offered, the deliverance, however difficult it may be, shall be given.

***~~Only let us commit our cause to God alone.~~***

We must despair of help from the creature. God permits our trials to increase, in order to produce this very effect upon us. "We must have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead." While there is any mixture of self-dependence in us, God will not interpose; but when, like Peter sinking in the waves, we cry out to Him, *"Lord, save me!"*He will stretch out His almighty hand, and wisely grant us the support which He knows is best for our particular situation.

***~~His intervention then shall bear upon it the evident stamp of his Divine agency.~~***

In a multitude of instances in which he "undertook for his people" of old, his power was as evident as in the passage of the Red Sea, or in the ruin of the walls of Jericho. I do not say that his interposition in our behalf shall be as visible to the eye of sense; but to the eye of faith it shall. Wonderful will be the support which he will give to the troubled spirit; insomuch that, while all outward circumstances remain the same, it shall have "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Look at the 107th Psalm; it is realized every day. Such are the spiritual distresses of God's people, and such are their deliverances in answer to their prayers. If therefore there is anyone that is now "oppressed" with any grievous affliction, let him go to the Lord Jesus Christ, and spread his needs before him, with confidence that he shall not pray in vain. Let the 143rd Psalm be his pattern and his encouragement. David there says, "My spirit is overwhelmed within me, and my heart within me is desolate. But I stretch forth my hands unto you; my soul thirsts after you as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit fails; hide not your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit; cause me to hear your loving-kindness in the morning, for in you do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto you! [Psalm 143:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 143.4-8)."

Spread your needs before your God in that way; and be assured, that "though heaviness may continue for a night, joy shall come to you in the morning." "God will not contend with you forever, lest your spirit should fail before him;" but "he will be with you in trouble," and "be to you a light in your darkness," and "give you songs in the night." "These things will he do to you, and not forsake you," until "he has turned your mourning into dancing, and put off your sackcloth, and girded you with gladness;" for "he never yet failed anyone who trusted in him;" "nor said to any of the seed of Jacob: Seek my face in vain."

***~~#917~~***

***~~FORGIVENESS KNOWN AND ENJOYED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 38:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.17)~~***

KJV. "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but you have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

NIV. "Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back!"

In all the Scriptures there is not anything more tender and pathetic than this "writing of Hezekiah after he had recovered from his sickness." In it he delineates all his feelings in the view of his expected dissolution. He could appeal to God that he had "walked before God with truth and with a perfect heart, [2 Kings 20:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.2-3);" and yet in the prospect of death was more alarmed and agitated than any other person of whom we read.

To account for this, commentators have supposed that Hezekiah had respect only to the welfare of his Church and people, who by his removal would lose the benefit of all his past exertions for their good, and of those which he yet contemplated. But while we agree in ascribing much of his grief to this, we yet think that it by no means sufficiently accounts for many of his expressions, which evidently refer to his own personal concerns. In our text he complains that "for peace he had had great bitterness;" though from it he was now mercifully relieved. His "anguish being now changed," he returned thanks to God, saying, "You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for you have cast all my sins behind your back!"

***~~I. Explanation of Hezekiah's words.~~***

***~~1. Hezekiah's words may be referring to the recovery of his body.~~***

Sickness and death were originally introduced by sin; and in many instances have they been inflicted in token of God's displeasure on account of sin. The leprosy of Miriam was a affliction on account of sin, as was that also of Gehazi. And the worms which preyed on the vitals of King Herod received their commission from an offended God. Even the Christian Church is exposed to the same kind of correction from the hand of an offended Father; for, on account of the abuses which reigned among the Corinthians at the Lord's supper, "many were weak and sickly among them, and many had fallen asleep [1 Corinthians 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.30)."

Frequently were temporal judgments inflicted with an express view to prevent the necessity of inflicting far heavier judgments in the world to come! [1 Corinthians 11:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.32), as also 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.

Now it seems evident that Hezekiah viewed his sickness in this light, namely, as a judgment sent from God on account of some iniquity which he had committed. As the enemies of David said in his sickness, "A deadly disease—that is, a disease judicially inflicted—cleaves fast unto him [Psalm 41:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 41.8);" and as the enemies of the Lord Jesus accounted him to be judicially "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, [Isaiah 53:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.4);" so did Hezekiah judge respecting himself at that time; he thought that God was now "calling his sins to remembrance, [1 Kings 17:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 17.18)," and punishing him on account of them.

With such views as these, we cannot wonder that during the continuance of the affliction he should "have great bitterness;" and that in the removal of it he should find such an occasion of joy and gratitude. It is worthy of observation, that the Psalmist speaks of the removal of temporal judgments from the people of Israel in terms exactly similar to those which Hezekiah uses in reference to his recovery from sickness, "You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger! [Psalm 85:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.1-3)."

This then shows us why the pious Hezekiah so grievously complained of his sickness, and so earnestly implored a restoration to health. This explains those words of his, "I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid! [Isaiah 38:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.14)."

***~~2. Hezekiah's words may be referring to the state of his soul.~~***

When he complains of God having, "like a lion, broken all his bones," it seems evident, that God had withdrawn from him for a season his usual consolations, and that he was much in the state of David, who, under the pressure of a dangerous illness, cried, "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps; your wrath lies hard upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves, [Psalm 88:3-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.3-7)." Whether there was any particular occasion for this dispensation, we are not informed. We know that Job, who was esteemed by God himself as "a perfect man," was subjected to a similar trial for his good. And, if this dispensation had no other end than to counteract that propensity to pride which afterwards broke forth, and brought down upon Hezekiah the severest displeasure of the Almighty, *it was justly and graciously ordained!*

For deliverance from a state like this, we wonder not that Hezekiah should bless and magnify the Lord. Who can think of being delivered from the pit of corruption, and not rejoice? Who can contemplate God as having "cast all his sins behind his back," and not bless him from his inmost soul, "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion! [Psalm 103:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.1-4)."

Consider what is implied in this expression; it imports that "God will remember our sins no more." Once "he set our iniquities before him, and our secret sins in the light of his countenance [Psalm 90:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 90.8)." But now he hides his face from them, [Psalm 51:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.9)," "blots them out [Isaiah 43:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.25)," from the book of his remembrance, and "casts them into the very depths of the sea! [Micah 7:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.18-19)," from whence they shall never rise to appear against us in judgment. Truly, if on the receipt of such a mercy as this "he had held his peace, the very stones would have cried out against him."

We must not omit to notice *the source to which Hezekiah traces this great deliverance; it is to God's sovereign love and mercy.*He does not say, "From a respect to my deserts you have done thus;" but, "in love to my soul" you have done it. And to this must all spiritual blessings be traced. Whatever mercy God has given to us, it is the fruit of "his great love with which he has loved us! [Ephesians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.4)," even of that love which knows neither beginning nor end! [Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.3).

***~~II. Hezekiah's words thus explained, I shall now proceed to, apply them.~~***

There are two remarks which I will make upon them. They show us, in a very forcible way,

***~~1. What our chief desire should be under any afflictive dispensation.~~***

Our great concern usually is to get the affliction itself removed. But judgments may be *removed*in anger, as well as *sent*in anger, [Hosea 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 13.11); and God may cease to smite us, only because he is determined not to strive with us any longer, but to give us over to final impenitence, [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3). [Isaiah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.5). Our first object should be, to inquire of God, "Show me why you contend with me? [Job 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.2)." and then to seek the removal of that sin which God has visited with his displeasure.

If we can fix on no particular sin, which has provoked God to anger—yet we know that there is an immense load of guilt upon our souls; and therefore we should pray as David did, "The troubles of my heart are enlarged; O bring me out of my distresses! Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins! [Psalm 25:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.17-18)."

Here a variety of sins may be pointed out, as subjects of self-examination. Sin, even one single sin, being retained before God's face, will be the heaviest curse that can befall us; but, if our sins be "cast behind his back," the most accumulated trials shall only "augment our eternal weight of glory! [2 Corinthians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.17)."

***~~2. What exalted happiness we are privileged to enjoy.~~***

Hezekiah spoke of the forgiveness of his sins as already granted, yes, and manifested also with full assurance to his soul. And this is the common privilege of all believers. As Isaiah had a live coal from off the altar applied to his lips, with this assurance, "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged," so have we the promises applied to our souls at this day, "the Holy Spirit of promise sealing them upon our hearts, [Ephesians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13)," and thereby becoming to us "a Spirit of adoption, and a witness of our being the children of God, [Romans 8:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15-16)."

Doubtless there are marks by which these manifestations must be determined, [1 John 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.13); [1 John 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.14); but it is not by the marks alone that we can attain the consolations here spoken of; these can be imparted only by Him who is emphatically called the comforter; but the assurance itself is, if not the attainment of all—yet certainly the privilege of all who truly believe, [1 John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.20).

Live not then below your privileges. And, as God generally makes use of afflictions to prepare us for the enjoyment of them, *learn to welcome any trials which it may please God to send*, [Romans 5:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.3-5).

Only, if God cast your sins behind his back, be the more concerned to set them ever before your own face, [Psalm 51:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.3); that your own souls may be the more deeply humbled, [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.63), and that the grace of God may be the more abundantly exalted, [1 Timothy 1:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.12-14).

***~~#918~~***

***~~PRAISING GOD FOR HIS MERCIES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 38:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.19)~~***

KJV. "The living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known your truth."

NIV. "The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness!"

This is a part of a most moving record, written by Hezekiah after his recovery from a sickness which he had expected to terminate in death. The description which he gives of his feelings is certainly very different from what we should have expected from so good a man; but when we reflect on the particular situation in which he was placed, as a reformer of all his subjects; and the prospect that by his removal all his past efforts would be frustrated; we no longer wonder that he should express so great anxiety to live, and such a lively sense of his obligations to God, who, in answer to his prayers, and the prayers of the Prophet Isaiah, had promised to add fifteen years to his life.

Indeed, under almost any circumstances, the living have reason to bless their God for the prolongation of their days; and the words which I have read will afford me a fit occasion to show the return which this mercy at all times calls for at our hands.

It is the duty of every living man to glorify his God:

**I. In a way of devout acknowledgment.**

Such a return is called for:

***~~1. From those who are yet unprepared for death.~~***

Let them reflect a moment, where they would have now been, if they had been taken hence in their present state; let them consider how many have been removed, while they have been left; and what the feelings are of those who have been so taken into the presence of their God, and methinks they will need no exhortation from me to praise their God, they will find their souls penetrated with the devoutest gratitude, and will be saying, "The living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day!"

Tell me, you who are here alive this day, have you not reason to bless your God for the space which is yet given you for repentance; for the opportunities yet afforded you of access to God through Christ; for the continued influences of the Holy Spirit, who yet strives with you to bring you to salvation?

Suppose one, who has been called to his great account, and doomed to the misery which his sins have merited, could be restored for a few days to the situation in which you stand; would he be insensible to the mercy given unto him, or lukewarm in improving his renewed advantages? No! truly; so great a blessing would not be despised by him; but he would instantly become an example to all around him, saying, "Bless our God, as I do this day!"

Do you then regard the blessing of a protracted life, as you would if so restored; and employ your every remaining hour in making that life a blessing indeed, even the means of securing everlasting blessedness and glory at the right hand of God.

***~~2. From those also who are ready to meet their God.~~***

It may be thought that these have the less reason to be thankful for life, because they are already prepared for death, which would be to them a door to everlasting happiness. But this was the state of Hezekiah, who could appeal to God, that he had "walked before him in truth and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his sight, verse 3;" and yet it was this holy man who uttered the thanksgiving in our text.

It must be remembered, that there are many great and glorious ends of life, which are instantly and forever frustrated by death! The instant that we depart hence, there is no more opportunity of honoring God on earth, or of benefitting our fellow-creatures, or of advancing our own eternal interests, "The grave cannot praise you, death cannot celebrate you; those who go down to the pit, cannot hope for your truth;" these are things which the living only can engage in; and therefore the living are bound to estimate their high privileges aright, and to improve them with all diligence, as long as these advantages are continued to them.

Doubtless, in the eternal world, the dead in Christ are happy. But is there a redeemed soul that does not desire to advance the honor of his God in this world? Is there one who does not long to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of his fellow sinners? Or is there one who does not wish to augment the talents committed to him, that in so doing he may find a greater measure of approbation from his God?

I say, then, to every one here present, whatever be the measure of grace that you have attained, you are greatly indebted to God for the prolongation of your life; and it should be to you a subject of most ardent praise and thanksgiving!

But this gratitude should be expressed also,

***~~II. In a way of affectionate commendation.~~***

It is well to speak of God's mercies, whether they are general or special, public or personal; as it is said, "One generation shall praise your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts; they shall abundantly utter the memory of your great goodness, and shall sing of your righteousness, [Psalm 145:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.4); [Psalm 145:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.7)." But it would seem that Hezekiah was peculiarly anxious to transmit to succeeding generations the knowledge of the true God, and of all the wonders which he had wrought for his people Israel. In the same way, this is the desire which every living man should feel; and especially under the dispensation under which we live, wherein the truth of God, in all the wonders of redeeming love, is made known to men.

***~~We ought to transmit to others the truth that has been revealed to us.~~***

This was the command repeatedly given to Israel of old [Deuteronomy 4:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.8-9); [Deuteronomy 6:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 6.6-7). And the obligation to obey it was deeply felt by all the saints, who regarded God's Law as a sacred deposit, committed to them for the benefit of their children, and their children's children, even to the last generations, [Psalm 78:2-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.2-6). For this very end it was that the Passover, [Exodus 12:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.25-27), and other rites, [Exodus 13:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 13.14-15), were ordained, and that memorials also were established, [Joshua 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 4.22-24); even that an inquiry might be excited, in every successive generation, into the things so exhibited to their view; and that the information contained in them might be transmitted and perpetuated to the end of time.

The Lord's Supper is intended to answer the same end; for, in the administration of it, we show forth the Lord's death until he comes! [1 Corinthians 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.26)."

And the hope of effecting this ought to make life regarded by us as an invaluable blessing.

What *father*would not wish to make known God's truth to his children; and account the prolongation of his life a rich mercy from the Lord, as giving further opportunities for the advancement of their eternal welfare?

I may say, too, what *pastor*, who stands, as it were, in the relation of a father to his flock, would not adore his God for the strength whereby he is enabled to labor for their good?

The Apostle *Paul*judged, so far as respected his own personal feelings, that it was "desirable rather to depart, and to be with Christ!" But yet, reflecting on the importance of his life to the welfare of the Church, he was willing to forego his own personal happiness, and to have a life of labor and of suffering prolonged to him, that he might still further advance the interests of God's people, [Philippians 1:21-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.21-25).

Thus should the hope of benefiting others endear life to us; and every effort be made, as long as life shall last, to transmit to others the light which we ourselves have received.

***~~And now, brethren,~~***

***~~1. Let me call you to the performance of this duty.~~***

It is a duty equally pertaining to all, (so far as they have an ability to discharge it,) to "render unto the Lord according to the benefits conferred upon them." Yes, all should strive to be, in this respect, patterns and examples to those around them. To those in like circumstances with ourselves, we should be able to say, "Let all of you praise God, as I do this day."

But permit me to ask of the generality among us: What would be the state of things, if all were to take you for their pattern? Would God be glorified in any measure as he ought? Would his truth be diffused as it ought to be? Would not rather the mercies of God pass unacknowledged, and his revealed will be almost utterly forgotten? Do not think that a mere lukewarm engagement in God's service will suffice.

If, indeed, the blessing of life calls for nothing better at your hands than this, I will be content that you shall render him nothing better; but if life be of such importance as I have represented, then I call on every living soul to say with David, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; while I live will I praise the Lord! I will sing praises unto God while I have my being! [Psalm 146:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 146.1-2)."

***~~2. Let me urge it by that most appropriate consideration which occupied the mind of the grateful Hezekiah.~~***

"The grave cannot praise God, nor can death celebrate him! verse 18." This is the only time for serving and honoring God in this world. And how soon this opportunity may have passed away, who can tell? Another day, and all power to serve your God may have passed away forever. I must then say to you, "Work while it is day; for the night comes wherein no man can work! [John 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.4)." Should your soul be required of you before you have given yourselves up to God—then how painful will be your reflections to all eternity! *Has ever any man think that he had begun to honor God too soon; or had too diligently engaged in that blessed work?*Is there one in *Heaven*that regrets he began to serve his God so soon?

Is there one in *Hell*that curses not his folly for neglecting to improve the advantages that were afforded him?

I call you, then, to prevent those sad reflections which a neglect of God will occasion in a dying hour; and to secure now, the eternal approbation of your God, by dedicating yourselves altogether to his service!

***~~#919~~***

***~~HEZEKIAH'S THANKSGIVING FOR HIS RECOVERY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 38:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.20)~~***

"The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord."

[Preached on the occasion of the recovery of his late Majesty, George III. March 15, 1789.]

To make public acknowledgments to God for national mercies is a duty so evident, that people of all characters and denominations are eager to the performance of it. The very heathen thought that they had not properly testified their joy on account of any signal victories or deliverances, until they had made some public procession to the temples of their deities, or offered sacrifices to their honor.

A greater cause for thankfulness than that which we are now assembled to commemorate, England has never seen:  
a king, who, for his excellent character, stands almost unrivaled,  
a king, who is truly the father of his people,  
a king, who is, if I may so speak, the idol of the nation which he governs,  
is restored to health from the most afflictive of all disorders. What cause for joy and thankfulness is this! And indeed you have already in some measure testified your joy; and I would hope the reality was as universal as the appearance. But surely we should not rest satisfied with such demonstrations of joy; we should have our lamps trimmed and our lights burning within us; we should have a sacred flame kindled in our hearts; and we should endeavor to excite others to rejoice with us.

When David was brought, as he tells us, into the dust of death, and, in answer to his prayer, was delivered from it, he said, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you. You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows! [Psalm 22:22-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.22-25)."

Now such should be the desire of our hearts to glorify God for the king's recovery; not contented with offering up our praises in secret, we should say with him in the text, "the Lord was ready to save; therefore we will sing our songs in the house of the Lord."

In discoursing upon these words, we will consider:

**I. The import of Hezekiah's words.**

***~~This will partly appear from the occasion on which they were uttered.~~***

This chapter begins with a very affecting account of King Hezekiah's sickness; a message was sent to him from the Lord, to tell him that he should die of his disorder. These melancholy tidings no sooner reached his ears than he turned his face towards the wall and greatly wept. In the previous verses we have a copy of what he himself wrote concerning the workings of his own mind under that affliction, "A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery: I said, "In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?" I said, "I will not again see the LORD, the LORD, in the land of the living; no longer will I look on mankind, or be with those who now dwell in this world. Like a shepherd's tent my house has been pulled down and taken from me. Like a weaver I have rolled up my life, and he has cut me off from the loom; day and night you made an end of me. I waited patiently till dawn, but like a lion he broke all my bones; day and night you made an end of me. I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid! [Isaiah 38:9-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.9-14)."

Now it is possible enough that Hezekiah was, in a considerable degree, under bondage to the fear of death; but yet we cannot suppose that all this grief originated from that one cause; no, he surely felt much for the glory of God and the prosperity of his people—both of which, as far as he could judge, would be very materially affected by his removal at that particular crisis.

He was one of the best kings that ever governed the Jewish nation. No sooner did he come to the throne than he began to reform the abuses which had been introduced in preceding reigns. He threw down the altars that had been built; he opened and repaired the temple which had been shut up and left to decay; he restored the sacrifices which had been long neglected; he stirred up the people throughout all the kingdom to reform their lives; and he ardently longed to see these beginnings of reformation carried further into effect. He had very lately beheld the whole country overrun by Sennacherib's army, and Jerusalem itself reduced to the utmost distress and danger; and though he had seen a great part of the Assyrian army destroyed by the hand of God—yet he knew that the Assyrians were still a powerful enemy, and that if the Jewish nation should relapse into their former wickedness, they could not expect another miraculous interposition from God.

He was also aware that having no son to succeed him, there would probably be internal divisions about a successor; so that if he were taken away at this time, the cause of religion would be neglected, and the whole Jewish nation be given over to suffer the consequences of their apostasy from God. That these reflections greatly contributed to his grief, seems plainly intimated in the answer which God gave to his prayer, as it is recorded both in [2 Kings 20:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 20.6), and in the chapter before us; in both of which places God not only promises to prolong his life, but to deliver the city out of the hands of the king of Assyria, and to defend it for his own name's sake.

Afflicted with these gloomy prospects, he betook himself to *the best of all remedies, prayer*; and as we are expressly told that Isaiah joined with him in crying to Heaven on a former occasion, it is reasonable to suppose that, when he saw the king so overwhelmed with the news which he had brought him, he did not neglect this opportunity of joining with him in prayer for his recovery.

Behold, their prayer prevailed. Yes, so speedily did it prevail, that before Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, the Word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Tell Hezekiah, thus says the Lord; I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears, behold, I will heal you!" God moreover commanded the prophet to make a plaster of figs, and to put it upon the boil, and to assure the king that in three days he would be well enough to go up to the house of the Lord. *This was done to show that we ought to use means, while at the same time we look not to the means, but to God, for the desired success*.

Being restored to health he comes into the house of the Lord, and pours out his soul in pious and devout thanksgivings; knowing that, if he had died in his illness, he would never have had any more opportunities of glorifying God before men, he exclaims, "The grave cannot praise you, death cannot celebrate you, they that go down to the pit cannot hope for your truth; the living, the living, he shall praise you, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known your truth;" and then he adds in the words of the text, "The Lord was ready to save me, therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord."

***~~But we shall have a further insight into the meaning of the text, if we consider more particularly the words themselves.~~***

They contain a thankful acknowledgment to God for his recovery, and a determination to glorify him for it as long as he should live. "The Lord was ready to save me," says the king. He does not blasphemously ascribe his recovery to his physicians, or to the means used, notwithstanding they were used according to God's own prescription; but he gives the honor, where alone it is due, to God!

In disorders of any kind our eyes should not be so fixed upon the creature as they usually are; our expectation should be from God alone; it is "he who kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and brings up." But that which Hezekiah seems to have been more particularly affected with, was the Lord's readiness to help him, "the Lord was ready to save me."

This is a matter of astonishment to all who have ever tried the power and prevalency of prayer; God does not indeed bind himself to answer prayer immediately, at least not in the way in which *we*expect it to be answered; yet does he often with marvelous condescension grant the requests of his people as soon as they are offered up; he often visibly fulfills that precious promise recorded in Isaiah, "It shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear!" David mentions this as his own experience, and seems to have been struck with it as Hezekiah was, "I will praise you with my whole heart, O God; for in the day when I cried, you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul! [Psalm 138:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 138.1); [Psalm 138:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 138.3).

So said Hezekiah in the text, "The Lord was ready to save me; therefore will we sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord." He determined that as the mercy given to him was a public benefit, so he would manifest his sense of it by public acknowledgments. He recorded this mercy and had it set to music, that all the nation might join with him in singing praises to God for it. Nor would he allow it ever to be effaced from his memory; he made the recital of this mercy a part of his daily devotions; and determined he would continue to do so as long as he should live; judging very properly that *his life, which had been so miraculously spared, should be spent wholly in the service of his God*.

Nothing more being necessary to illustrate the meaning of the words, we shall pass on to notice,

***~~II. The use we should make of Hezekiah's words.~~***

***~~1. To excite our gratitude for the king's recovery.~~***

There is a striking resemblance between the event which we are now met to commemorate, and that recorded in the passage before us. I will beg permission to point it out in several particulars.

*Hezekiah*, you have heard, was one of the most illustrious kings that ever sat upon the Jewish throne; the glory of God and the welfare of his people were ever near his heart. He set a good example to all his subjects, and ardently desired to see them no less obedient to their God than loyal to himself; he published his edicts prohibiting whatever was offensive to God, and enforcing the observance of the divine laws. In short, if you would know his character, see it drawn by the inspired penman, "Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good, and right, and true before the Lord his God; and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered! [2 Chronicles 31:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 31.20-21)."

Now compare that with our gracious Sovereign; he has but limited power, and therefore cannot effect all he would; but what he would do if he were able, we see by the proclamation which was not long since issued. But this is a part of our subject on which it would not be proper to say much, nor is it needful that we should; for we trust that his excellent character is too deeply engraved in all our hearts to need any repetition of them from this place.

But further. The resemblance holds good in the probable consequences of their illness. Hezekiah was sick near unto death, so that, until his recovery, he was utterly incapacitated for the business of the nation. If he had been left in the state he was, or had been taken away, his subjects would have suffered an irreparable loss. What they would have suffered we may judge in part from what they did actually suffer, when Manasseh the son of Hezekiah came to the throne: idolatry was re-established throughout the kingdom; and God, wearied as it were with the greatness of their provocations, gave them over, together with Manasseh their king, into the hands of their Babylonish enemies.

What would have been the consequence if our king's illness had continued, none can tell. We mean not to cast reflections upon any person or party; we would abhor a party spirit either in religion or politics; but this we may say without a possibility of giving offence to any; that, however wisely the defect of an executive power might have been supplied, and however faithfully it might have been employed—still the nation would have suffered an almost irreparable injury; for the very sinews of government would have been cut asunder.

This, we say, would have been the case, supposing that everything had been planned with the most consummate wisdom, and executed with the most unblemished integrity. But what might have happened, God alone knows; blessed be his name! he has delivered us now from the apprehensions of the calamities we have so earnestly deprecated, and so justly dreaded.

Again. The resemblance holds good in the means by which they were recovered from their illness. What was there in a plaster made of figs that could give so sudden a turn to a mortal disorder as to remove it in three days? Just as much as there was in the waters of Jordan to cleanse Naaman from his leprosy, or in the clay and spittle which our Lord used, to open the eyes of a blind man.

*It was prayer that healed Hezekiah!* Yes, prayer pierced the skies and entered into the ears of the Lord Almighty. "I have heard your prayer, said God, and have seen your tears, and will heal you." And what has healed our gracious king? We answer without disparagement to any, prayer; a spirit of prayer has been poured out upon all God's people throughout the nation; all that have a saving interest in the court of Heaven, have cried day and night to God on his behalf. The prayers of the church prevailed for the delivering of *Peter*out of prison; so we doubt not but that the king's recovery is an answer to prayer; to the prayers of those very Christians who are yet too often hated, despised, and persecuted. It is true; God has used means; but what means? Not the art of medicine, but repose and quiet. We mean not to detract from the merit of those who have assisted in his cure; they deserve well of the nation at large; and we shall rejoice to see them rewarded according to their desert; but the glory is God's, and his alone; the king's recovery is the gift of God; and that in answer to the prayers of his own people; and, we trust, that they will not discontinue their prayers for him even to the last hour of their lives.

Once more. The resemblance holds good in the readiness with which God has given the desired mercy. Hezekiah's and Isaiah's prayer was answered before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court; and in three more days the cure was effected.

So has it been with respect to the cure given unto our king; it was withheld for a season, just to make all praying people earnest in their supplications. The *rod*impending over the nation seemed for some time ready to fall; yet was the stroke by various occurrences providentially delayed; and then at the very moment that it was expected to fall, behold! deliverance comes.

So truly may the words of the text be applied to this event, "the Lord was ready to save." Surely that proverb has been again verified to us, that "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen;" for God did not deliver Isaac more seasonably from the hand of Abraham, than he has done from the calamities which threatened us.

Now if the occasions for joy and thankfulness are so similar, ought not our expressions of thankfulness to be similar also? Ought we not to render unto God according to the benefits he has conferred upon us? Yes, surely!

Did Hezekiah then make his deliverance a matter of universal praise? Then let us stir up both ourselves and others to a devout and holy joy on account of the recovery of our king. Did he determine that he would make it a subject of public thanksgiving? Then let us do the same. Did he determine to remember it and sing of it all his days? Then let us endeavor to keep upon our minds a lively sense of this mercy, and not provoke God to withdraw it from us by our ingratitude.

***~~2. To excite our gratitude for the mercies of redemption.~~***

We all without exception are sick near unto death. What Isaiah says of the Jews is applicable to every nation upon earth, "the whole head," says he, "is sick;" that is, the kings and nobles, and all the governors in church and state, are infected with a mortal disease! "The whole heart is faint," that is, the people at large, without any exception, are dying of the same malady, "from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores!"

Sin is this deadly disorder, and unless we are recovered from it, the consequence must be dreadful to us all. We are not left to conjecture what this may be. We know; we know for certain; we know that no temporal calamity whatever can be compared with it; we know that our disorder, if not speedily cured, must issue in everlasting death; in an everlasting separation of soul and body from God, and in an everlasting suffering of divine vengeance!

But we are fully warranted to say with Hezekiah in the text, "the Lord is ready to save us."

Of all the thousands who came to our Lord for healing when he was on earth, not so much as one applied in vain; nor did ever anyone call upon him for spiritual healing without experiencing his readiness to save. And is he not "the same yesterday, today, and forever?"

Would Jesus ever have come down from Heaven, if he had not been ready to save?

Would he have shed his precious blood for us, if he had not been ready to save?

Would he have sent his Word, his ministers, and his Holy Spirit, to invite and draw us to him, if he had not been ready to save?

Has he not said, "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live! Turn! Turn from your evil ways, for why will you die?" And would he thus have sworn, invited, entreated, and expostulated, if he had not been ready to save?

Beloved brethren, would to God that you would all put him to the trial! Not one of you would then ever perish in your sins; he would cleanse you in his blood from all sin; he would restore your souls to health; and make them to flourish in immortal youth and beauty.

Do you ask, How shall I obtain this blessing? We answer, just as the king of Judah, or the king of Britain, were restored to health; means were used for both; but the means were very inadequate to the end which was to be obtained. That which prevailed for both, was prayer; and that shall prevail for you as well. If you were like Jonah at the bottom of the sea in a whale's belly, the prayer of faith would deliver you.

Still however you must use the means; attend to the Word that is preached; and read the Bible in your closets; but do not imagine that these means can convert your souls. No, that is the Lord's work; and you will use all means in vain, if you do not beg of God to render them effectual. But if you pray, you will find the Lord far more ready to give, than you are to ask. To save sinners is his work, his office, his delight—it is "the joy which was set before him, in expectation of which he endured the cross and despised the shame!" Yes, it is the import of his very name; for he was "called Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins!" This is a perpetual ground of joy to all; it calls for our devoutest thanks and praises; it should make us all adopt the language of the text, and say, "The Lord is ready to save me; therefore I will sing songs to him all the days of my life, in the house of the Lord."

But if you have been restored to health; if you have experienced his salvation; if upon a review of your past life you can say with Hezekiah, "The Lord was ready to save me;" then what ought to be the frame of your mind? how should you give thanks! The Psalmist says, "Let them give thanks whom the Lord has redeemed;" and if they will not, who will? The angels were not half so much indebted to him, as they for whom he shed his blood. "O then give thanks, give thanks unto our God; for it well befits the just to be thankful;" "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the God of our salvation."

***~~An Analysis of the Foregoing Sermon~~***

The Author had at one time thought of inserting a considerable number of short sketches; but he relinquished the idea, from an apprehension that they would not afford sufficient aid to those, whose more immediate benefit he consulted. The following Analysis is added as a specimen.

Public acknowledgments of national mercies are proper. The king's recovery is a just ground for them at this time.

**I.** **The import of the words**. In which observe:

**1.** The occasion of them. Here notice:

Hezekiah's illness, and dread of Approaching death.

His character, as most concerned for God's glory and the national welfare.

The probable consequences of his death.

The means of his recovery: prayer; figs.

His expressions of thankfulness for it.

**2.** The words themselves. These contain:

The grounds of his thankfulness that God had restored him; and that he had been ready to do so.

The expressions of it.

He would give all the glory to God.

He would do it publicly.

He would have others to do the same.

He would do it all his life.

***~~II. The use we should make of them.~~***

**1.** To excite our gratitude for the king's recovery.

The occasions are similar:  
as to the people that were ill (compare Hezekiah, and the king); as to the probable consequences of their not recovering;  
as to the means used for their recovery, Prayer;  
and as to the readiness of God to comply with our requests.

Our gratitude should be similar: public, universal, fervent, perpetual.

**2.** To excite our gratitude for the mercies of redemption.

All are sick and near unto death.

The consequences of not recovering will be dreadful.

The Lord is ready to heal us.

Prayer is the grand mean of recovery.

All should rejoice: the sick, that the Lord is ready to save; the recovered, that he was, and still is, ready.

***~~#920~~***

***~~THE SCOPE AND TENDENCY OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 40:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.1-2)~~***

KJV. "Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

NIV. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins!"

The *ministerial office*is fitly compared to that of a steward, who divides to every one his proper portion, [2 Timothy 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.15). [Luke 12:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.42). The execution of it calls for much wisdom and discretion, because there must be a diversity both in the matter and manner of our addresses corresponding with the different states of the people to whom we minister. To some we must of necessity proclaim the terrors of God's law, however painful such a discharge of our duty may be. But the great scope of our ministry is rather to comfort the Lord's people, and to "guide their feet into the way of peace."

The commission here given to the servants of Jehovah, is very remarkable, being thrice repeated in one single verse. In this view of it I am led particularly to show:

***~~I. How earnestly God desires the comfort and happiness of his people.~~***

There are a people . . . *chosen*by the Father, *redeemed*by Christ,  
and *sanctified*by the Spirit,  
who are eminently the Lord's people! [Deuteronomy 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.6). [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9). And that God is peculiarly solicitous to promote their comfort, appears:

***~~1. From the commission which he gave to his beloved Son.~~***

He sent his Son into the world to execute his eternal counsels. And our Lord himself, in his first public address to the people, declared, that the comfort of mourners was a principal object of his mission, [Isaiah 41:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.1-3). [Luke 4:17-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.17-19).

***~~2. From the end for which he sends his Spirit into the hearts of men.~~***

God sends his Spirit:  
to testify of Christ, [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26),  
to witness our adoption into his family, [Romans 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.15),  
and to seal us unto the day of redemption, [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14).

In performing these offices he comforts our souls. And he is, on that very account, distinguished by the name of "the Comforter, [John 16:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7)."

***~~3. From the titles which the Father himself assumes.~~***

He calls himself "The God of consolation, [Romans 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.5)," and "the Comforter of all those who are "cast down, 2 Corinthians 7:6." He compares his concern to that of a Father pitying his child, [Psalm 103:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.13), and to a mother comforting with tenderest assiduities her afflicted infant, [Isaiah 66:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.13). Yes, he assures us that his regards far exceed those of the most affectionate parent in the universe, [Isaiah 49:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.15).

***~~4. From the solemn charge he gives to ministers.~~***

He sends his servants "to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)." And he especially charges them to "strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees, and to say to those who are of a fearful heart: Be strong, do not fear; your God will come and save you! [Isaiah 35:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.3-4)." Thrice is that injunction repeated in the text; and in the execution of this duty we are justly called, "The helpers of your joy, [2 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.24)."

***~~5. From the dispensations both of his providence and grace.~~***

When he allowed his beloved Son to be tempted in all things like unto us, it was with a view to comfort us under our temptations, [Hebrews 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.18). And when he comforted Paul under his multiplied afflictions, he still consulted the comfort of his Church and people, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Yes, however he diversified his dispensations, he had invariably the same gracious object in view, [2 Corinthians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.6).

As a further proof of his regard for our comfort, we may point out to you,

***~~II. What abundant provision he has made for comfort in his Word.~~***

The message which we are commanded to deliver to his people, contains in it the richest sources of consolation:

***~~1. To God's ancient people.~~***

To them primarily was this proclamation made. And it was verified in part, when they were delivered from the Babylonian captivity and restored to the enjoyment of their former privileges in Jerusalem. But it was yet further fulfilled, when, by the sending of their Messiah, they were delivered from the yoke of the Mosaic law, which imposed a burden which none of them were able to sustain.

That, to those who received him as their Messiah, was a season of exceeding great joy; for they were translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and from a state of insupportable bondage "into the glorious liberty of the children of God!"

It will not however be fully accomplished, until they shall, in their national capacity, return from their present dispersion, and be re-united, Israel with Judah, in their own land. Then their warfare will be as much accomplished as it can be in this life. Then the tokens of God's displeasure will be removed from them; and a state of prosperity be given to them that shall far exceed all the sufferings they have ever endured, and all the privileges they have ever enjoyed. At no time have they ever been punished beyond their deserts; (their severest trials have been far less than their iniquities deserved,) but in that day shall their blessings infinitely exceed all that they can now either contemplate or conceive!

***~~2. To his believing people, in every age.~~***

It is the true Christian alone who can form any just idea of the import of my text. "His warfare is accomplished"—so far at least, as that he is in a state of victory over the world, and the flesh and the devil. He can say, "Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ." "His sins too, are blotted out as a morning cloud," and "put away from him as far as the east is from the west." God has mercifully "forgiven him all trespasses;" and he stands before God "without spot or blemish." As for the blessings given to him, no words can possibly express them; his "peace passes all understanding;" and his "joy is unspeakable and full of glory." "He has even now entered into rest! [Hebrews 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.3)," according to that promise given him by our Lord, "Come unto me, all you that are weary and heavy-laden; and I will give you rest".

***~~See, then, brethren:~~***

**1. What an astonishing difference exists between those who embrace** **the Gospel, and those who disregard the Gospel.**

Can that be said of carnal and worldly men, which is here spoken of the Lord's people? Are their chains broken? Are their sins forgiven? Are their comforts greater than any judgments that await them? No! they are yet in bondage to sin and Satan; their sins are all "sealed up in a bag" against the day of judgment; and the wrath of God is shortly coming upon them to the uttermost! *Then*it will appear how great a "difference there is between those who serve the Lord, and those who serve him not, [Malachi 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.18)." Do not let this distinction then be made a subject of profane ridicule, but a motive to seek the Lord, that we may be numbered with his people, and be made partakers of his benefits.

***~~2. What inconceivable blessedness awaits the Lord's people in the eternal world!~~***

Even in this life, as we have seen, their blessedness is exceedingly great. But what will it be when once they shall lay down this mortal body, and enter into the joy of their Lord? Now conflicts remain even to their last hour; and whatever victories they may gain, they must still remain ready for the combat. And, though "God has forgiven them all their trespasses," so that he will never frown upon them in the eternal world—they still have occasion daily to implore mercy at his hands on account of their short-comings and defects. But in the day that they shall be taken into the immediate presence of their God, O! who can tell us what they shall "receive at his hands!"

Dear brethren, do not think lightly of that joy; but be willing to sacrifice everything for the attainment of it. Think in what estimation it is held by all who have entered into the eternal world. What would tempt those in Heaven to part with it? What would not they who are now in Hell, give to be made partakers of it? Be assured, that it will be fully commensurate with all your labors, though they had been a thousand times greater than they have been; and that one single hour of it will richly recompense all that it is possible for any finite creature either to do or suffer in the Savior's cause.

***~~#921~~***

***~~THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.6-8)~~***

KJV. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withers, the flower fades; because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

NIV. "A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?" "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

God does according to his own will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth! When his time was come for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, in vain did Pharaoh labor to retain them. Thus the prophet was inspired to declare the redemption of the Jews from Babylon, and the still greater redemption of the world from sin and Satan, in despite of all endeavors which might be used to thwart the divine purpose.

This seems to be the immediate scope of the words before us. But they may also be taken as a general declaration respecting *the instability of everything human, and the immutability of God's Word*.

***~~I. The instability of everything human.~~***

The comparison with man to grass is very frequent in the Scriptures; and it affords a just description of:

***~~1. Our temporal comforts.~~***

The grass in the early spring adorns and beautifies the face of nature; but, when parched by a burning sun or an eastern blast, it soon withers and decays. In the same manner the beauty and strength of youth are soon turned to weakness and deformity; the affluence and honor of the rich are quickly changed to degradation and want; and all our goodly fabrics of ease and happiness are soon demolished. James illustrates this truth by the very comparison in the text, [James 1:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.9-11); and as Job experienced it in the days of old, so in every age may numerous instances be found of such vicissitudes.

***~~2. Our spiritual comforts.~~***

God is pleased to give rich consolation to his people; and, while they enjoy it, their faces are made, as it were, to shine, as the face of Moses did, when he descended from the holy mount.

But these comforts are often of short continuance.

When *Peter*thought of building tabernacles to protract his happiness, a cloud immediately overshadowed him, and he was called down to renew his conflicts with the world, [Mark 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.5); [Mark 9:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.7); [Mark 9:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.14).

When *David*imagined his mountain so strong that he should never be moved, God hid his face from him and he was troubled, [Psalm 30:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.7). Thus it is also with all the people of God; whose manifold changes in this respect may well be compared with the diversified scenes of nature under the influence of kindly showers, or malignant winds, [Psalm 102:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.2-4).

***~~3. Our very life itself.~~***

In the midst of health we promise ourselves years to come; but, when God withdraws our breath, we instantly return to our native dust! Some look more mirthful and possess more "goodliness" than others; but they are only as the "flower of the field," which cannot survive the grass, and frequently falls before it. In this view the inspired writers describe our state, [Job 14:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 14.1-2). [Psalm 90:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 90.3-6). [Psalm 103:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.15-16); and both observation and experience attest the truth of their representations; we must all confess, in the language of the text, "Surely, the people are grass!"

But while everything human is thus frail and transient, we have a firm foundation whereon to stand, namely,

***~~II. The immutability of God's blessed Word.~~***

The "Word of God" here spoken of, may be understood as relating to Christ, who is often called by this name, and whose immutability is mentioned by the Psalmist in this very view, [Psalm 102:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.11-12); [Psalm 102:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.26-27). But Peter informs us that the prophet spoke of the Gospel salvation, [1 Peter 1:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.24-25).

***~~This "word" contains the most important and comforting truths.~~***

There is no lack, which it is not able to supply. There is no disorder, for which it does not prescribe a remedy. The Word of God proclaims: *health*to the sick, *sight*to the blind, *liberty*to the captives,  
and *life*to the dead!

So extensive are its invitations and promises, that there is not a human being excluded from its provisions, nor is there any limit to the blessings which it will impart. It assures us, that sins of a crimson die may become white as snow; that the most heavy-laden soul may obtain rest; and that none who come to Jesus, shall on any account be cast out! [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18). [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28). [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37).

***~~One great excellence in these truths, is that they are as immutable as God himself.~~***

How vain were the attempts of men and devils to stop the progress of the Gospel, and to make void the declarations of God respecting it! Equally vain shall be every endeavor to invalidate the promises which he has made to the believing penitent. Has he said, that "all manner of sin shall be forgiven; that he will cleanse us from all our filthiness and from all our idols; and that, where he has begun the good work, he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ?" We may rest assured that he will fulfill his Word; for "he is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man that he should repent."

But it may be said, "Though *God*changes not—yet *we*change, and therefore we may forfeit our interest in the promises." True; if God should leave us, we not only may, but most undoubtedly shall, both fall and perish. But God has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you; so that we may adopt the confident declaration of Paul, "I know in whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." We must be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Then, though difficulties may arise, and appear for a while wholly insurmountable, they shall surely be overcome, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and we shall see the salvation of God."

***~~We may learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. The folly of seeking our rest in earthly things.~~***

The injunction given to the prophet to "Cry out!" and to proclaim aloud that "all flesh is grass," and the frequent repetition of this comparison, are strong intimations of the extreme vanity of everything here below. Who among us has not found that the enjoyments he fondly anticipated, have either eluded his grasp, or deceived his expectation? *Whatever then are our comforts in life, let us not set our hearts upon them*, but "so use the world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion thereof passes away."

***~~2. The wisdom of embracing Gospel-salvation.~~***

They who trust in the Word of God are sure of never being disappointed. However high their expectations are raised, they shall never be ashamed. The stronger their faith, the more abiding will be their comfort. Besides, their enjoyments, instead of cloying, will become more and more delightful; and, instead of bringing with them many inseparable ills, will produce nothing but good to their souls.

But that which most of all must endear the Gospel to them is, that their happiness will then be consummated, when they, whose comforts were of an earthly nature, will beg for even a drop of water to cool their tongue.

Let the Word of God then be precious to our souls.

Let Christ, as revealed in it, be the object of our faith, and hope, and love.

Let us embrace God's promises, assured that they shall all be fulfilled.

Let us tremble at God's threatenings, knowing that they shall all be executed.

Thus shall we be armored against the temptations of the world, and shall possess an eternity of glory—when the lovers of this present world will lie down in everlasting burnings!

***~~#922~~***

***~~THE MESSIAH'S Coming~~***

***~~[Isaiah 40:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.9)~~***

"Say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God!"

The Gospel with all its sublime mysteries is regarded by the generality of people with coldness and indifference; whereas the most indistinct prospects of it were sufficient to fill the patriarchs and prophets with holy rapture.

It was a view of its Divine Author which drew forth from the prophet this animated exhortation. He saw Jesus as it were already incarnate, and called upon the daughters of Zion and Jerusalem to proclaim and celebrate his coming, It should be read as in the margin, "O daughter, that bring good tidings to Zion," etc. It was customary for women to celebrate the praises of God in public on remarkable occasions. See [Exodus 15:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.20-21), and [1 Samuel 18:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 18.6-7). That which he proposed to them as the subject of their song, is the one great subject also of our ministrations. To call your attention unto Jesus, to set him forth as crucified before your eyes, and, with an exalted voice, to cry, *Behold your God!*This is our commission. But before we proceed to execute it, we shall,

***~~I. Show what is implied in this commission.~~***

We cannot fail to observe, what the prophet so strongly intimates:

***~~1. That Christ is God.~~***

This is a fundamental article of our faith. *The Godhead of Christ is that which stamps a value on his sufferings, and renders the whole of his sin-atoning death meritorious and efficient*. It would be to little purpose to say with Pilate, "Behold the man," if we could not also add with the prophet, "Behold your God!"

We are not left to doubt of this important truth; it is clearly established in almost every page of the sacred volume; we need go no further than to the writings of Isaiah; and we shall find it expressly asserted, that the person who was to be "a Child born, and a Son given to us," was the mighty God! [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6). He was therefore to be called Emmanuel, because he was God with us, [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.14) with [Matthew 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.23). In the very chapter before us, his forerunner, John the Baptist, was commissioned to cry, Prepare the way of the Lord (Jehovah) make straight in the desert, a high-way for our God, verse 3. But we need not multiply words on this subject, since the voice of inspiration universally proclaims him to have been, "God manifest in the flesh!" "God over all, blessed forever! [1 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 3.16). [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5)."

***~~2. That a saving knowledge of Christ is of vital importance.~~***

It was through all "the cities of Judah," and with her "voice lifted up with strength," that the daughter of Zion was to celebrate the Messiah's coming. And whence the need of such zeal and labor, but on account of the universal importance of those glad tidings? Indeed there is no other thing which men so much need to be acquainted with as the work and offices of Christ. No attainments can save them, if they be ignorant of Christ; nor can any past sins condemn them, if they be truly acquainted with this divine Savior. "This," as our Lord himself tells us, "is life eternal, to know God as the only true God, and Jesus Christ! [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.3)," as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father. So excellent is this knowledge, that Paul "counted all things but loss and dung in comparison with it, [Philippians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.8)." It is the one means of obtaining reconciliation with God, peace of conscience, and deliverance from the power of sin, [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7). O that all were aware how deeply they are in need of receiving these glad tidings! We would proclaim them with infinitely greater pleasure, if we had not so much reason to complain, that "they are counted as a strange thing, [Hosea 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 8.12)."

Taking for granted these fundamental and indisputable truths, we shall:

***~~II. Endeavor to execute the commission.~~***

The text does not limit us to any particular point of view in which we are to behold our God; we shall therefore direct your attention to him:

***~~1. As descending from Heaven.~~***

Lo! he comes from his bright abodes; but in what form does he appear? Does he descend in solemn pomp, attended with myriads of the heavenly host? Does he visit the palaces of the great, and assume our nature in its most dignified appearance? No! He is born of an obscure virgin, and has no better place for his reception than a stable. Go, look into his poor abode; see him wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger; look, I say, and behold your God! What marvelous condescension! how does it almost exceed belief—yet, incredible as it appears, we must again say, Behold your God!

***~~2. As sojourning on earth.~~***

Surely, no sooner could his incarnation be known, than all the world, like the eastern Magi, must flock to worship him, [Matthew 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 2.11). So one might reasonably hope; but what is that "weeping and lamentation" that we hear? The young messiah's life is sought. The children from two years old and under are massacred through the whole district, that no possibility may be left for his escape; and He is saved only by the special interposition of his heavenly Father, [Matthew 2:16-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 2.16-20). See his parents fleeing with him by night to a distant, a heathen, land—not daring to return to their native country until the death of their blood-thirsty persecutor! But this was only the beginning of sorrows.

View him afterwards when he assumed his proper office as the Prophet of his church; no sooner did he open his commission, than the short-lived applause afforded him was turned into the most cruel indignation; and if he had not by an exertion of his own almighty power effected his escape, his very first sermon would have been his last! [Luke 4:28-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.28-30).

But to pass over to the period of his death.

Who is it that we see prostrate on the ground, and bathed in a bloody sweat?

Who is it that those cruel soldiers are mocking, buffeting, and scourging?

Who is it that is nailed to yonder cross, and expiring under such an accumulated weight of shame and misery?

To all this we answer, Behold your God!

***~~3. As exalted to glory.~~***

Hitherto we have witnessed nothing but his humiliation; but the shame of his cross was quickly rolled away. In vain were the stone, the seal, the watch! He burst the bands of death, and rose triumphant.

Henceforth we are to view him ascending amidst myriads of exulting angels, sitting on the throne of his glory, dispensing blessings to the church below, and receiving the adorations of his church above! Christian! lift up your eyes to Heaven, and behold your once crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer! Now he shines forth in all his glory, and says to you, even to you, "Behold me, behold me! [Isaiah 65:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.1)." O that every eye might see him, and that all, who have pierced him by their sins, might mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourns for his first-born son, [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.10).

Soon indeed all shall see him; the time is shortly coming, when he will descend from Heaven again, not however to stand, as before, like a criminal at man's tribunal, but *to execute judgment on the assembled universe*; and then happy shall they be who have behold him here with suitable affection; they shall behold his face with inexpressible delight; and be the spectators of his glory, and the partners of his throne, to all eternity!

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. The careless.~~***

Know what the sins which you commit so lightly, have occasioned? Go to Calvary and behold your God; and then judge whether sin be so light and trivial a matter as you are ready to imagine! The Jews and Romans were the immediate actors in that bloody tragedy; but your sins, and the sins of an ungodly world, were the real occasion of all that your God endured; and, while you continue in your sins, you "crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Ah! did David cast away the water, for which the lives of three men had been endangered, and will not you cast away the sins which have actually shed the blood of God! [2 Samuel 23:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.16-17) with [Acts 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.28). Let this thought induce you to put away the polluted cup from your lips; and and let "the love of Christ constrain you to live unto him who died for you and rose again."

**2. The heavy-laden.**

To you especially the Savior cries, "Look unto me, and be saved! "Come unto me, and find rest unto your souls!" Consider well, who it is that thus invites you; it is your Savior, and your God; there can be no lack of efficacy in his blood, or of power in his arm; *he is a strong rock, a sure foundation, an all-sufficient help*. Trust then in him; and, as a sight of the bronze serpent healed the dying Israelites, so shall a view of your divine Savior prove an effectual remedy for all your needs. You shall soon, like Thomas, exclaim with holy rapture, "My Lord and my God!" Or, in the language long since dictated to you by the spirit of prophecy, "Lo, this is Our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation! [Isaiah 25:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.9)."

***~~#923~~***

***~~CHRIST'S CARE FOR HIS SHEEP~~***

***~~[Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11)~~***

KJV. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young."

NIV. "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

The holy Psalmist, speaking of Jehovah's care of him, says, "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and then, from the union of the Godhead with the pastoral office, he infers, "Therefore I shall not want, [Psalm 23:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.1)." The same incomprehensible union is mentioned by the prophet in the passage before us.

The heralds that proclaimed the coming of the Messiah were commanded to draw the attention of men to them in these words, "Behold your God!" The person thus announced, is further described in the words preceding our text, "Behold! the Lord God will come;" and then it is added, "he shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

Now when it is considered how prone the Israelites were to idolatry, it cannot be conceived that the prophet should speak of the Messiah in such exalted terms, if they did not properly belong to him. But the prophets generally, and Isaiah in particular, are very full and explicit in declaring that Jehovah was to become incarnate, and by the sacrifice of himself to redeem and save a ruined world.

It is not however of his *person*that we now propose to speak, but of his office; that being the particular point to which my text refers; yet it would be improper to pass over such a strong testimony to the divinity of our blessed Lord, because, in the judgment of all, but more especially of Jews, it must have the effect of silencing every doubt upon that important subject. And it adds no little interest to the description here given of him, when we know, that He who so condescends to minister as a Shepherd to the least and lowest of his flock, is the Most High God; according as it is written, "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and his name shall be called: The Mighty God! [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6)."

The words which form the ground-work of our discourse, will lead me to set before you:

***~~I. A general view of our Lord as a Shepherd.~~***

The character of a shepherd is frequently assigned to our blessed Lord, in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, [Ezekiel 37:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.24). [Zechariah 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.7). [Hebrews 13:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.20). [1 Peter 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.4).

Every duty pertaining to the shepherd's office is executed by him:

**1. He gathers his sheep to his fold.**

They are "wandering upon the dark mountains, in a cloudy and dark day, [Ezekiel 34:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.6);" "every one going in his own way, [Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.6)," and "after the imaginations of his own heart, [Jeremiah 23:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.17)." The paths of all, though differing from each other according as the age, the inclinations, and the diversified temptations of the different individuals may lead them; all agree in this, that they are far distant from the ways of God's commandments, [Romans 3:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.11-12). But "he searches for them, and seeks them out." He follows them:  
by the preaching of his *Word*,  
by the dispensations of his *providence*,  
by the mighty working of his *Spirit*;  
and, having found them, "he apprehends them" by his pastoral crook, [Philippians 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.12), and "makes them willing" to return with him, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3), and "carries them home upon his shoulders rejoicing, [Luke 15:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.5-6)."

***~~2. He provides for the needs of his sheep.~~***

O! how sweet are the pastures into which he leads them! [Ezekiel 34:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.14). Who can express the delight which a converted soul experiences in feeding upon the promises, "the exceeding great and precious promises" of his God? In comparison with the food provided for the sheep of Christ, all else is but as "husks on which the swine exist! [Luke 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.16). [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.2)." This is set forth in Scripture under the image of a luxurious feast, [Isaiah 24:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.6); and truly it is "a feast of fat things" to all the saints; a feast, of which even the angels themselves would account it a privilege to partake, [Psalm 78:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.25).

***~~3. He affords his sheep effectual protection.~~***

As weak as they are, and beset with many enemies, they are preserved in perfect safety, [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5). He who laid down his life for them, will allow "none to pluck them out of his hand, [John 10:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.11); [John 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28).", "They lie down beside the still waters, [Psalm 23:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.2)," which are a just emblem of the tranquility of their own souls, "They are kept in perfect peace, because they trust in him, [Isaiah 26:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.3)."

***~~4. He cares for his sheep according to their diversified necessities.~~***

Among them there will be some who are sick, or diseased, or injured by some misfortune. He knows all their particular cases, and imparts to them the relief which they severally need, "bringing buck those which have been driven away, binding up that which has been broken, and strengthening those who are sick, [Ezekiel 34:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.16)." and never intermitting his care of them, until he has brought them to his fold above, [Psalm 23:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.5-6).

But our text requires us to take,

***~~II. A more particular view of him as ministering to the weak and needy.~~***

Let us notice then in a more especial manner:

***~~1. His tenderness to the weak.~~***

The *lambs*which have been but recently born, may be supposed incapable of proceeding with the flock to any distant pasture. But these "he will gather with his arms, and carry in his bosom." "He will not despise the day of small things, [Zechariah 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.10)." There is not one in all his flock so weak, but he will pay the most careful attention to its necessities. He who gave so particular a charge to Peter to "feed his lambs," and required this of him as a necessary proof of his love, [John 21:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 21.15)—will not himself neglect his lambs; but rather will augment his tender assiduities in proportion as the weakness of the lamb calls for more peculiar care. He will even take it up, and "carry it in his bosom."

In what an endearing view does this place the character of our blessed Lord! How sweetly encouraging is this consideration to those who feel their weakness, and are ready to despond because of it!

Let us remember, that when his disciples would have kept people from troubling him with their little children, he reproved them, and said, "Let the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of Heaven, [Mark 10:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 10.14)." Whether therefore you are children in respect of your natural or spiritual birth, fail not to come to him, assured, that he will bear with your infirmities, and "perfect his own strength in your weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)."

***~~2. His compassion to the afflicted.~~***

He will have respect to the state of his flock, even as Jacob had, who "would not overdrive them one day, lest they should all die, [Genesis 33:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 33.13-14)." So our blessed Lord "will gently lead those who are with young." *There are among his people, many who are weary and heavy-laden with a sense of sin, and bowed down greatly by reason of the difficulties of their way*. But to the former he sends a special invitation, with an assured promise of rest, [Matthew 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.28); and to the latter he authorizes us to declare, that "he will raise them up, [Psalm 146:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 146.8)." In truth, he is pre-eminently distinguished by this, that "he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax! [Matthew 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.20). Consider what is implied in these metaphors. A *bruised reed*is, according to human appearance, incapable of ever sending forth a melodious sound. *Smoking flax*has, as it were, but a hidden spark of fire, while it is sending forth whole clouds of corruption. Yet will Christ fan the expiring spark to a flame; and attune the reed to send forth the most heavenly strains. Let none then despond, however destitute they may be of anything to encourage them from within; but let them "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10)."

***~~Let me now add a few words,~~***

***~~1. In commendation of this good Shepherd.~~***

Whence is it that all do not put themselves under his care? Is there any lack of love, or tenderness, or power in him? God frequently, by his prophets, called on his rebellious people to testify against him, and to say, whether there had been any lack of kindness or care in him, "O my people, what have I done unto you? Wherein have I wearied you? Testify against me, [Micah 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.3). [Jeremiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5); [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.31)." "What could I have done more for my people than I have done ,[Isaiah 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.4)."

So do I now, in the name of this good Shepherd, call upon you all this day, to bear, if you can, your testimony against him.

Whom did he ever neglect or despise?

Whom that sought him did he ever refuse to receive?

Whom that trusted in him, did he ever omit to supply according to his necessities?

If then no complaint ever was, or could be made against him from the world, let every heart appreciate his excellency, and every soul commit itself to its care!

***~~2. For the augmentation and encouragement of his flock.~~***

You who have to this hour been going astray, and walking in the way of your own hearts: reflect upon your guilt and danger, and "return now without delay to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, [1 Peter 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.25)." As employed by him, I come now to search you out, and to bring you home to his fold, [Ephesians 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.11). [Mark 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.15). [Jeremiah 23:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.4). O think, how delightful it will be to "hear his voice calling every one of you by name, [John 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.3)," and "going in and out with you" as long as you shall remain in this dreary wilderness, [John 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.9), and then performing the same office for you in the realms of bliss, [Revelation 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.17), "O listen not to the voice of strangers"; but, follow Him; that you may be one fold under one Shepherd forever and ever! [John 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.5); [John 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.9); [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.16).

***~~#924~~***

***~~THE DESPONDING ENCOURAGED~~***

**[Isaiah 40:27-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-31)**

KJV. "Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

NIV. "Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint!"

*The human mind is prone to extremes*. Before a man comes to the knowledge of himself, he is filled with presumption, and accounts himself as safe as if there were no judgments denounced against him; but, when he begins to feel his guilt and helplessness, he is ready to run into the opposite extreme of despondency, and to account his state as irremediable, as if there were not a promise in the Bible suited to his condition.

Such were the feelings of the Jews before their captivity in Babylon, and under the pressure of the troubles which they experienced in their bondage. The prophet, by anticipation, views them us already in Babylon, and reproves the desponding apprehensions which there depressed their souls.

The words I have read, will afford me a fit occasion to set before you:

***~~I. The discouragements which the Lord's people suffer.~~***

It is really no uncommon thing for even pious souls to utter the complaint mentioned in my text. They do this on a variety of occasions:

***~~1. Under a sense of unpardoned guilt.~~***

Sin, which in an unenlightened state appears so small an evil—to an awakened soul appears "exceeding sinful," insomuch that he is ready to imagine it can never be forgiven. Hear David under these distressing apprehensions, "O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. Because of your wrath, there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness, because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear!" [Psalm 38:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.1-4)."

Even good men will, at times, adopt the language of Cain, *"My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven!*[Genesis 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 4.13)." Nor is this to be wondered at; for when we view sin with all its aggravations, and especially as committed against the love of Christ and the strivings of his Spirit, it does assume a character most odious, and justly deserving of God's heaviest indignation.

***~~2. Under the assaults of indwelling corruption.~~***

These continue long after a man is turned to the Lord. They have indeed received a check; but often, like water obstructed by a dam, they rise and swell the more for the opposition that is made to them. Paul's experience in this respect has kept thousands from utter despondency. How bitterly he complains of "the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin that was in his members!'" From hence, like a man bound with chains to a loathsome carcass, from which he cannot get loose, he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! [Romans 7:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.23-24)." He indeed saw that deliverance was laid up for him in and through Christ.

But many are driven almost to despair; their conflicts with sin and Satan are so frequent and so violent, and sometimes, in appearance at least, so ineffectual, that they are ready to imagine that God has given them up, and that it is in vain for them to contend any more. In this state they are strongly tempted to say, "There is no hope; I have loved strangers; and after them will I go! [Jeremiah 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.25)."

***~~3. Under the pressure of long-continued afflictions.~~***

These will oppress and overwhelm the strongest man, if he is not supported from above with strength according to his day. Under these, *David*frequently complains, as if God had left him and forsaken him, "Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me! [Psalm 88:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.14-17)."

The patient *Job*; [Job 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 3.1); [Job 27:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 27.2),  
the pious *Jeremiah*; [Jeremiah 20:1-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 20.1-18),  
the fearless *Elijah*,  
—all fainted through their troubles! *Job*and *Jeremiah* cursed the day of their birth! And *Elijah*, scarcely less excusable, prayed impatiently to God to "take away his life," in order to liberate him from his troubles! [1 Kings 19:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.4).

Even the Savior himself, in his afflictions, adopted the language of the Psalmist, "My God, my God! why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring! [Psalm 22:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.1)."

No doubt the hands of the strongest will hang down, and the heart of the stoutest faint—if God does not strengthen them to drink the bitter cup which is put into their hands.

But it would not be thus with them, if they used aright:

***~~II. The antidote provided for them in the Scriptures.~~***

In the Scriptures, Jehovah is represented as ordering and overruling all things!

***~~1. He is a God of almighty power.~~***

There is nothing in the whole universe which did not derive its existence from his all-creating hand; nor is anything left to its own operations without his sovereign control. Be it either prosperity or disaster, it exists only through God's decree; as God himself has told us, "I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things! [Isaiah 45:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.7)." Even the murderers of our blessed Lord, though perfectly free agents in all that they did, "effected only what the hand und counsel of Jehovah himself had determined before to be done! [Acts 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.28)."

Be it so then:  
our guilt lies heavy on our souls;  
our corruptions work with almost irresistible force;  
our troubles of divers kinds threaten utterly to destroy us!

But is there no power able to deliver? Cannot He who created all things by a word, and spoke them into existence, accomplish for us whatever our necessities require? "Is his *ear*heavy, that he cannot hear; or his *arm*shortened—that he cannot save? [Isaiah 59:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.1)."

Were we left to the uncontrolled power of our spiritual enemies, we might well despair; but while God is seated on his throne, we need never fear but that he will interpose for our relief, if only we cast our care on him. "If we cast our burden upon him—then he will sustain us."

***~~2. He is a God of unerring wisdom.~~***

Because God does not exert his Almighty power for us at the first moment that we implore his aid, we suppose "that our way is hidden from him, and our judgment is passed over from him," or, in other words, that he has utterly cast us off.

***~~But we forget that he has gracious designs to accomplish; and that he accomplishes them in ways of which we have no conception, and which appear calculated only to defeat his ends.~~***

We measure his wisdom by the faulty line of our own reason; forgetting that "his ways are in the great deep," and "past finding out" by any finite intelligence; that "there is no searching of his understanding."

Now let this be considered. Let the afflicted saint contemplate Jehovah as ordering and overruling everything for the good of his people and for the glory of his own name. Let him say, 'I have cried long, and not been heard—but perhaps the purposes of Jehovah are not yet ripe for accomplishment; there is more of humiliation to be produced in my soul; more of a preparation of mind for discerning; of his mighty hand; more depression to be caused in order to a more glorious exaltation.'

Let him recollect the ways in which *Joseph's*dreams were realized; and bear in mind, that the same God sits at the helm, and directs the vessel amidst all the storms, "the very storms and winds all fulfilling his sovereign will and pleasure." This would be abundantly sufficient to compose the mind under the most afflictive circumstances that can be imagined. For where there is unerring wisdom to direct, and Almighty power to execute, no difficulty can exist, which shall not be overruled for good! "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose! [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28)."

But let the text declare,

***~~III. The happy state of those who duly improve this antidote.~~***

***~~To wait on God in prayer is necessary, in order to the obtaining of help from him.~~***

He has said that "he will be inquired of, in order that he may do for us the things that he has promised, [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.37)." This is indispensable in every view; for without it there would be no acknowledgment of him on our part, nor any readiness to give him glory, when he had interposed for our relief.

*Nor is it only in a way of importunity that we are to wait upon him, but in a way of humble dependence also, and of meek submission to his will!*We must leave everything to his all-wise disposal, "tarrying his leisure," and "waiting his time, however long the vision may be delayed, [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.3)." "He who believes must not make haste, [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16)."

***~~To all who comply with this requisite, the most effectual relief is secured.~~***

It is God's delight to support his people in the time of need, "He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might, he increases strength." This, I say, is his habit and delight; and one great end of his delaying the communication of his aid is, to make men more sensible of their dependence on him, and more thankful for his gracious interpositions. Until he grants his answers to prayer, all human efforts are vain, "even the youths will faint and be weary; and the young men, however strong they imagine themselves to be, will utterly fall;" but "they that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength."

Like the eagle, when molting, they may be greatly reduced; but in due season, like him, with his renovated plumage, they shall soar on high, above all the trials and temptations with which they have been oppressed. Their course may be yet long and difficult; the opposition which they may have to encounter may be exceeding violent; but, through the Divine aid, "they shall run and not be weary; they shall march onward, and not faint!"

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. In a way of tender expostulation.~~***

Such a *desponding*state of mind as God's people of old indulged, is approved by many, as characteristic of humility. But it is a mark of pride rather, and of unbelief; and it is calculated only to excite God's heavy displeasure. This appears from the manner in which it is here reproved. In fact, it argues a forgetfulness of all our principles as men acknowledging a Supreme Being.

Have we not known, that there is a God who orders all things both in Heaven and in earth?

Have we not heard, that "without him not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground?"

How then can we imagine that he is inattentive to his suffering or conflicting people, or that he is at a loss for means whereby to effect their deliverance?

Have we not heard that "he has given us his only dear Son to die for us? What, then, will he withhold from those who seek him?"

Have we not heard that "he has made with us an everlasting covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure?" And is not a supply of all our needs there provided for? Be ashamed, then, my brethren, that, with such principles, you can give way to any disquietude. You have only to "commit yourselves, and all your concerns, into his hands; and be sure that he will bring to pass" whatever shall eventually advance your best interests!

***~~2. In a way of affectionate encouragement.~~***

See to what all your fears are really owing. The pious Asaph was harassed with them, like you; but, on reflection, he said, "This is *my*infirmity! [Psalm 77:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-10)." *Be assured that not all the powers of earth or Hell can prevail against you, if only, in the exercise of faith and patience, you wait on God*.

Take courage, then, and call yourselves to an account, as *David*did, for such unworthy fears and such unhallowed depression, "Why are you cast down, O my soul! and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God [Psalm 42:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.5); [Psalm 42:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.11); [Psalm 43:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 43.5)."

If you need some *specific promise* for your support, take that which God has given to such as are in your very state, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand! [Isaiah 41:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.10)."

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior! [Isaiah 43:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.1-3)."

Rest on these promises, and you shall soon add your testimony to that of David, "I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD! [Psalm 40:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.1-3)."

***~~#925~~***

***~~THE WEAK BELIEVER COMFORTED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 41:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.10)~~***

"Do not fear; for I am with you;  
 be not dismayed; for I am your God;  
 I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you.  
 Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

Of the contest between Jehovah and the worshipers of idols—we who have never witnessed the madness of idolaters, have no conception; and, consequently, the pains taken by Jehovah to vindicate his exclusive right to the worship of his creatures appear almost superfluous. But the pertinacity with which idol-worship was upheld, not only among the heathen nations around Judea, but even in Judea itself, rendered every possible effort necessary to withstand its influence, and to suppress its growth. Power and authority were for the most part on the side of idolatry; in support of which the bitterest persecutions were set on foot against the adherents of true religion. But Jehovah promises to them his support, and assures them, that, however severely tried for a season, they shall triumph at last. This is the primary import of our text.

But there is a spiritual idolatry still prevalent, and that there still exists the same contest between Jehovah and the votaries of this present world, and that his faithful servants are still greatly obstructed in their ways, and painfully persecuted too for their fidelity to him, we shall see that the encouragement in our text is as needful for them, as ever it was for his people of old.

I propose then to set before you:

***~~I. The grounds which the Lord's people have for fear.~~***

The idea of *guilt*and *unworthiness*might well come into our view, if we were treating the subject without any reference to the context; but as the fear and dismay mentioned in our text originated only in the power of their enemies, their own inability to withstand them, and the fearful consequences of a defeat, we think it right to confine our observations to those topics.

The Lord's people then have many fears as arising from:

***~~1. The number and power of their enemies.~~***

It is well known that *the world and all its votaries are in direct opposition to the people of God*. As Gideon no sooner made a league with Joshua, than all the kings of Canaan confederated to destroy them; so no sooner does anyone enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ and submit to him—than the whole world accounts him a deserter from their cause, and use all their efforts to bring him back to their camp. Even our dearest friends will be the foremost in this warfare; and "our greatest foes be those of our own household."

In confirmation of this assertion, we appeal, not to the Scriptures only, but to fact and experience. Let any man set his face to seek the Lord, and all around him will put themselves in array against him, and employ all the arts of persuasion, ridicule, expostulation, and threat—in order, if possible, to divert him from his purpose. Those who, when he was going on in the ways of sin, never uttered a single word of advice to induce him to flee from the wrath to come—no sooner behold him turning into the way of righteousness, than they express the deepest concern about his welfare, and labor to the uttermost to reclaim him from what they account the most egregious folly!

In league with them will both the flesh, and the devil be; the one striving by the violence of its indwelling lusts, and the other by the subtlety of his devices—to draw him back into that state of guilt and bondage from which he has just escaped! [2 Peter 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.18).

Such enemies, so numerous, so subtle, so inveterate, the Christian scarcely knows how to encounter; and the thought of their combined and continued efforts to destroy him, fills him frequently with terror and "dismay".

***~~2. His utter inability to withstand the assaults of his enemies.~~***

The Christian has no idea of the extent of his own impotency to do what is good, until he comes to exert himself in the ways of God. He then finds that "without aid from the Lord Jesus Christ, he can do nothing." This oftentimes greatly discourages him, "If," says he, "I have run with footmen, and they have wearied me—then how shall I contend with horses? [Jeremiah 12:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 12.5)." If I am not able to encounter the least of all my enemies, how can I withstand the united force of all?

The discouragements arising from this source are the greater, because they so continually recur. The Christian cannot address himself to any duty, but he is constrained from painful experience to acknowledge that *all his sufficiency to do, or to will, or even to think what is good—is of God alone!*[Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13). [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5). Truly, if it were not that he had hope in God, he would sit down in utter despair.

***~~3. The dreadful consequence of a defeat.~~***

Eternity is at stake; an eternity of bliss or woe; of bliss or woe unutterable, and inconceivable; and to those only who overcome will the prize of victory be assigned, even to those who maintain the conflict to the end, and overcome all the enemies of their souls.

How fearful is the alternative! how dreadful the thought of dwelling with everlasting burnings! Can a man open his eyes to such a prospect, and not fear? Is it not sufficient to appall the stoutest heart? True indeed, some are borne up above all such fears, and are "assured, that, when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, they have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" but all are not so privileged; or rather, all do not so fully attain the enjoyment of their privileges; and to them a doubt or suspicion of their ultimate acceptance with God is a source of the most disquieting apprehension.

But however great their fears are, they may dismiss them all, when they are informed of,

***~~II. The encouragement here afforded them.~~***

Every difficulty that could harass their minds is obviated in our text, in which all their fears are anticipated, and their needs supplied.

***~~1. God promises them His presence.~~***

Were we left in the power of our enemies without any friend at hand to help us, then we might well fear. But God says to the trembling soul, "Do not fear; for I am with you." Now if but a fellow-creature were with us in a season of difficulty, we would take courage, especially if we knew that he was competent to afford us the protection we desired. How much more then may we be satisfied if Almighty God is with us!

In the contemplation of this, David says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be thrown into the midst of the sea, God is in the midst of us; we shall not be moved. God shall help us, and that right early. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge! [Psalm 46:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.1-2); [Psalm 46:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.5); [Psalm 46:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.7); [Psalm 46:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 46.11)."

But if it is said, God may be "with us" as an enemy, or as an indifferent spectator; therefore it is not a mere persuasion of his presence that will satisfy our minds. He further assures his people:

***~~2. God promises them His care.~~***

Believers are "his people; and he is their God;" and in this character will he be with them in all their trials. A stranger may see a person injured, and not feel himself sufficiently interested to interpose for his relief. But a husband, or a father, will not so act; he will feel the injury as done to himself; and will make the cause his own. So will God do for his people, who are authorized in all their troubles to say to him, "Arise, and plead your own cause." "Whoever touches them, touches the apple of his eye!" "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those who trust in him!" Every perfection that he possesses will he put forth for their preservation and protection.

Yet, as his people are required to exert themselves, and are apt to be discouraged on account of their extreme weakness,

***~~3. God promises them His strength.~~***

We are told that he will "put strength into his people, [Psalm 29:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 29.11)," and "strengthen them with might by his power in their inward man." What then need they to fear, when "the arms of their hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob! [Genesis 49:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 49.24)." The weakest of them all may fearlessly adopt the language of the prophet, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation! [Isaiah 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.2)." Yes, the weakest stripling, with his sling and his stone, may go forth against all the Goliaths in the universe, assured of victory; for "he can do all things, through Christ who strengthens him!"

Yet, because the Christian's enemies are far too strong for an arm of flesh, and he is apt, notwithstanding the strength imparted to him, to be discouraged,

***~~4. God promises them His help.~~***

Do not fear; for "I will *help*you," says God, "I will help your infirmities! [Romans 8:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.26)." In this expression there is something deserving of especial notice. The term used imports, that when our burden is so heavy and cumbersome that we cannot with all our exertions support it—God promises that he will take hold of it at the opposite end, and bear it together with us. Be it so then, that our burden is too heavy for us—but is it too heavy for him also? "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" "If he is for us, then not all the powers of earth and Hell combined can with any effect exert themselves against us! [Romans 8:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.31)."

Still, as long as anything depends on himself, the trembling believer cannot dispel his fears; and therefore, to complete the consolation afforded him,

**5.** **God promises them His effectual support.**

"I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." What can the believer want more than this—to have the eternal God for his refuge; and to have "underneath him his everlasting arms!" "O! happy indeed are you, O Israel. Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help, and the sword of your excellency! [Deuteronomy 33:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.27-29)."

After this promise, we wonder not at the assurances added to our text, "All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff. You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away. But you will rejoice in the LORD and glory in the Holy One of Israel! [Isaiah 41:11-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.11-16)."

And now, if, after this, any of you entertain unbelieving fears, let me expostulate with you, as God himself does.

"I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor? [Isaiah 51:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.12-13)."

Do not so dishonor your Lord and Savior; but believe him *able*, believe him *willing*, to afford you all needful support, and to "save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him!"

***~~Yet let me not conclude without adding a few words for the conviction of those who know nothing of such fears as these.~~***

They who have never had a fear of their state, are at this moment destitute of any scriptural hope:

What can they know of themselves?

What can they know of the Christian warfare?

What can they know of the Scriptures of truth?

They are altogether in darkness even until now. Can it be supposed that God would use such efforts for the encouragement of his people, if they did not need encouragement? Why did Jehovah so tenderly chide his people of old for their fears, and give them such rich promises of aid, if their situation did not require such supports, [Isaiah 40:27-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-31). Or why does our blessed Lord still say, "Do not fear, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom! [Luke 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.32)."

Surely, the Christian life is attended with many difficulties; and that all the supports and consolations afforded to the believer in the Holy Scriptures, are no more than his necessities require; and, if ever you begin to serve the Lord in truth, you will find the promise in our text more precious to you than gold, and "sweeter to you than honey, or the honeycomb!"

***~~#926~~***

***~~THE WORM JACOB THRESHING THE MOUNTAINS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 41:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.14-16)~~***

KJV. "Do not fear, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff; you shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and you shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel."

NIV. "Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. "See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff. You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away. But you will rejoice in the LORD, and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

*To comfort and encourage the weak is among the first duties of a Christian minister.* The command of God to all his servants is, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and dispel the fears of the desponding, with an assurance, that their God will come and save them, [Isaiah 35:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.3-4). This is an office executed by our blessed Lord, who "carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those who are with young, [Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11)." The delight which the Father himself also takes in raising up the drooping minds of his people, appears eminently in this, that he frequently addresses them in terms which they, through despondency, would use to characterize themselves; and then under those very characters assures them of his most favorable regards. This is particularly conspicuous in the passage before us, where, addressing his people, he declares,

***~~I. Their character.~~***

The name of a "worm" as applied to our blessed Lord, denotes his low and abject condition during his abode on earth, [Psalm 22:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.6). But, as applied to us, it rather represents our *weakness*and *insufficiency*for anything that is good. In this sense it does indeed most justly mark our character; for there is no creature less capable of active exertion than a worm, or less able to effect any material good; and certainly our inability to perform that which is good is extreme; for we not only cannot of ourselves do a good *action*, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5), but we cannot even speak a good *word*, [Matthew 12:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.34), or think a good *thought,*2 Corinthians 3:5. God himself must give us both to will and to do [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.13), and must work all our good works in us. As rational beings we have yet a considerable portion of the Divine image upon us. But as moral agents, "we are very far gone from original righteousness," and are altogether "dead in trespasses and sins;" nor have we any more power to renovate ourselves, than "an Ethiopian has to change his color, or a leopard his spots, [Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.23)."

**II. Their labors.**

*Notwithstanding our utter impotence, we have an immensely difficult work to perform*, "the worm Jacob" is required to "thresh mountains," and to reduce them all to dust; though himself liable to be crushed beneath the smallest clod, he must address himself to this mighty task.

There were to all human appearance, insurmountable obstacles to the progress of the Christian *Church*, which yet it was destined to overcome.

So are there mountains in the way of every *individual*, which yet he must remove, before he can arrive at the Promised Land.

What almost insuperable difficulties does the worldpresent to him! Its pleasures, its maxims, its habits, its company, its friendships, its hatred, its fiercest opposition—must all be regarded as a thing of nothing!

The flesh too, with all its affections and lusts, must be mortified and subdued!

Yes, Satan himself, with all the principalities and powers of Hell, must be encountered and overcome! [Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.12).

Alas! who is sufficient for these things? Who that is informed of *Demas*turning aside through love of this present evil world, and of the great Apostle Paul himself crying "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me" must not tremble for himself? But such is the work assigned us; and the weakest among us must undertake and execute it, before he can receive from God the promised recompense of reward.

***~~III. Their successes.~~***

As weak as they are, they all prevail at last!

As the *Jews*, notwithstanding all the obstructions of the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the warlike inhabitants of Canaan—obtained at last the full possession of the promised land.

And as the *Christian Church*triumphed at last over all the power of the Roman empire—so is *every believer*crowned with victory at last! Compare [Daniel 2:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.34-35) with the text. The hills and mountains are leveled through his unwearied exertions, [Isaiah 40:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.3-5); and he is "made more than conqueror through Christ who loves him!" Through faith he overcomes the world, [1 John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4).

By the aid of the Holy Spirit he mortifies the flesh, [Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.13). [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.24).

By a steady and uniform resistance, he overcomes Satan, so that that wicked fiend is constrained to flee from him, and to yield him the palm of victory, [James 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.7). [1 John 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.14); [1 John 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.18).

The full extent of the triumphs described in our text has never yet indeed been realized in the *Church*of Christ; we look to a period yet future, when "the mountains shall be as dust, and be scattered as by a whirlwind;" and possibly at that period the triumphs of *individuals*will be more complete. But even now, by a firm reliance on the promises, we may be enabled to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.1)." If we had but faith as a grain of mustard-seed, we might say to every mountain that is in our way, "Be removed! and it would immediately be cast into the depths of the sea! [Matthew 21:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.21)."

***~~IV. Their triumphs.~~***

With such *weakness*, and such *labors*—we might well expect the worm Jacob to sink in dejection and despair. But behold! he triumphs and exults, "rejoicing in the Lord, and glorying in the Holy One of Israel." Here it must be remarked, that he does not ascribe his successes to his own arm; he does "not sacrifice to his own net;" he gives the glory to Him, to whom alone it is due, even to "Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of his faith! [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

The language of David in reference to his victories exactly suits the Christian in reference to his spiritual triumphs, [Psalm 18:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 18.29); [Psalm 18:32-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 18.32-34); [Psalm 18:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 18.37); [Psalm 18:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 18.42). He readily acknowledges whence it is that the weapons of his warfare have accomplished such mighty things—namely, that they have been "mighty through God, [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.4-5) and [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.10)," who "has wrought all his works in him, [Isaiah 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.12)," and "of whom all his fruit has been found, [Hosea 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.8)."

Hence, while he acknowledges that "it is God who has made us for this very purpose, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5)," he shouts with devoutest gratitude, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! [1 Corinthians 15:57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.57) and [2 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.14)."

***~~Let us learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. The folly of unbelief.~~***

We are apt to be discouraged by reason of our weakness. But, what if we are as weak as the lowest worm? Is God therefore weak, or unable to effect the purposes of his grace? He characterizes us as "worms," on purpose that, "when weak in ourselves, we may be strong in him, and expect him to perfect his strength in our weakness." Instead therefore of being discouraged on account of our weakness, we should rather "rejoice and glory in it, that the power of Christ may rest upon us," and be glorified in us! [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9-10). We should not, like the unbelieving spies, contemplate the power of our enemies; but should, with believing Joshua, regard them all "as bread for us, [Numbers 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 14.3); [Numbers 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 14.9)." And, hurling defiance at them all, we should say, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; his hands shall surely finish the work he has begun! [Zechariah 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.7-8) with [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)."

***~~2. The need of constant exertions.~~***

*Our weakness is no excuse for inactivity*; nor does God's promised aid supersede the necessity of our own exertions. On the contrary, it is that very promise that encourages our exertions, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13). The mountains must be threshed by our arm, "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent must take it by force! [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12)." We must run our race, and fight our fight, and endure unto the end! For it is "to him only that overcomes, that the crown of glory will be given."

Give not way then to dejection or sloth, but go forth in the strength of the Lord Jesus; and when difficulties appear to be absolutely insurmountable, then go to him, and remind him of his promise, "I will strengthen you, yes I will help you, yes I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness! verse 10 with the text; and [Amos 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 5.9)." Then you shall find, that "you can do all things through him strengthening you," and that "Satan with all his train shall be shortly and eternally bruised under your feet!"

***~~#927~~***

***~~CONSOLATION FOR THE DESPONDING~~***

***~~[Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18)~~***

KJV. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

NIV. "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs."

*The Word of God is an inexhaustible source of instruction and comfort!* There are passages in it suited to people in all states and conditions; but it is calculated more especially for the afflicted and contrite. The passage before us is peculiarly adapted to a desponding soul. God, in verse 8, reminds his people of his relation to them; assures them of his presence, and promises them:  
strength, verse 10;  
victory, verse 14, 15; ("you, a worm, shall thresh the mountains;")  
and triumph, verse 16.

Not that they are to expect a continued series of prosperity; they may be reduced to great straits; but in their lowest state they shall still have ground for the richest consolation. In its primary sense it is an encouragement to the Jews to trust in God. In its spiritual meaning it extends to the people of God in all ages.

***~~I. An afflicted case described.~~***

***~~The people of God are for the most part in a low and afflicted state.~~***

All men, if they knew their state, are indeed "poor and needy;" but the generality think themselves "rich and increased with goods." *God's people, however, feel their poverty and need*. They are deeply sensible how destitute they are of wisdom, strength, etc.

***~~They ardently desire to be endued with holiness and comfort.~~***

Water, as having a cleansing and refreshing quality, may well be understood to mean holiness and comfort; and these are the chief objects of a Christian's pursuit. They long to be "delivered from the body of sin and death." They desire to be walking always in the light of God's countenance. They leave no means untried for the accomplishing of their wishes.

But they often seem to be laboring in vain, "they seek water, and find none".

They strive for victory, but the conflict remains:  
corruptions still at times harass and defile their souls;  
deadness and darkness still occasionally return upon them;  
and the blessedness they pant after seems as distant as ever.

**Their frequent disappointments create much dejection of mind,** "their tongue fails," etc.

"Hope deferred makes their heart sick." They faint, as a traveler after a long and fruitless search for water. They begin to conclude that God will not hear their prayers. They fear that he "has forsaken and forgotten them." Such diligence, disappointment, and despondency were not unknown to David, [Psalm 42:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.1-3); [Psalm 42:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.7); [Psalm 42:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.9) and [Psalm 88:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.1); [Psalm 88:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.3); [Psalm 88:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.6-7); [Psalm 88:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.14).

But in the text we have,

***~~II. Suitable consolation administered.~~***

A desponding person could not ask for more suitable matter of consolation. The character here given of God is not without great force.

*The desponding person thinks his case too hard to be remedied, and his sins too heinous to be forgiven.* He is here reminded what a God he has to deal with.

God is "the Lord,"  
with whom nothing is impossible, [Jeremiah 32:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.27),  
whose mercy is infinite [Exodus 34:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.6),  
whose love is unchangeable, [Malachi 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.6).

He is "the God of Israel! This title is very significant; it is as though God said 'Remember my servant Jacob, to what a distressing state he was reduced, how he wrestled with me all night in prayer, and yet did not prevail; remember, how I made as though I would leave him; yes, how I lamed him, and thus apparently increased his calamity. But he would not let me go, unless I blessed him. I therefore not only blessed him, but changed his name, and conferred a singular honor upon him by calling my church after his name. Thus did I show myself to be his God; and thus will I be, yes, thus I am the God of all who call upon me after his example.'

Or perhaps it refers rather to [Exodus 17:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 17.1-6), where his supplying of Israel with water is mentioned," who, however long he may try his people, will certainly bless them at last. Thus do these titles of God justify that consoling declaration, [Lamentations 3:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 3.32).

The promises here made by God, are exactly suited to the case. The subject of the soul's complaint is the very subject of God's promise. The soul laments 'God will not hear me; he has utterly forsaken me; it is absurd for me to cherish a hope; I might as soon expect to find rivers on a lofty mountain, as to possess grace and peace in my soul.'

"I will hear!" What an encouragement to continue in prayer!

"I will not forsake you!" What more can the fainting soul desire?

Here is a particular reference to the promise made to Jacob, [Genesis 28:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 28.15), which he afterwards pleaded with God, [Genesis 32:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.12), and which is renewed to us, [Hebrews 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5). "The most discouraging circumstances shall be no bar to my favors." "Apparent impossibilities shall be surmounted by me. Though the heart be as a dry and barren wilderness, it shall be refreshed, "I will open rivers in high places." "Nor shall my communications to you be either small or transient. They shall be plenteous as "pools and rivers," and incessant as "springs and fountains.""

Every one who relies on these promises shall experience consolation from them.

David bears his testimony that his cries were not in vain, [Psalm 34:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 34.6); and all who plead like him, shall find reason to make his acknowledgments, [Psalm 30:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.8-11).

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who are unconcerned about the blessings of salvation.~~***

The generality of people know but little of spiritual troubles; but their exemption from them is by no means to be desired. They at the same time have no interest in these precious promises; they taste not the rich consolations of the Gospel; and how will "their tongue fail for thirst" in the eternal world! Let all then seek to know their spiritual needs. Let them obey the invitation of our blessed Lord, [John 7:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-38). Let them take encouragement from that gracious offer, [Revelation 22:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.17).

***~~2. Those who are fainting for lack of the blessings of salvation.~~***

Many, eminently pious, have been in your state, but none ever waited upon God in vain. These promises cannot possibly fail of being accomplished. From them, as "from wells of salvation, you may draw water with joy." They shall certainly be fulfilled to you, both here, [Psalm 36:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.8), and forever! [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11).

***~~#928~~***

***~~CHRIST'S COMMISSION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 42:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.5-7)~~***

KJV. "Thus says God the Lord, he who created the heavens, and stretched them out; he who spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; he who gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, end give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."

NIV. "This is what God the LORD says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness!"

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for the Lord speaks." In the preceding verses he speaks to us, and calls our attention to "his elect servant," whom he had appointed to the office of saving man, and qualified to execute it in a manner honorable to himself, and effectual for that end. Compare [Matthew 12:15-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.15-21), which shows that the whole of this passage relates to Christ. But, in the words of our text, we overhear the almighty Jehovah, the eternal Father, addressing his co-equal, co-eternal Son. Ineffable mystery! And what a stupendous privilege to be admitted thus into the council chamber of the Most High! Surely if Moses was commanded to take off his shoes because the place where he stood was sanctified by the Divine presence—then it befits us to express the profoundest reverence, while we listen to the God of Heaven giving his commission to his only dear Son respecting the redemption of a ruined world.

***~~I. In this address we see the commission given to Jesus.~~***

Though Christ in his own nature is God equal with the Father—yet as man, and as Mediator, he acts as the Father's servant. In this capacity he received a commission:

***~~1. To undertake the work of our salvation.~~***

The first covenant which was made with Adam, being broken, it pleased God to make a new covenant; not so much with man, as with his own Son in man's behalf, [Galatians 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.17). [Titus 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.2). [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4).

The terms of this covenant were:

1. that Christ should make his soul an offering for our sin,

2. that he should have the souls of believefrs for his reward, [Isaiah 53:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10-12).

Christ was not only a *party*in this covenant, but also the *Mediator*and Surety of it, [Hebrews 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.6); [Hebrews 7:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.22). He mediated between God and man; and became a surety, both for God to man, and for man to God. He engaged on man's part, that he would be renewed after the Divine image, and be made obedient to the Divine will. On God's part, he engaged that his mercy should be extended to every believing penitent.

In this view Christ is said to be given "for a covenant;" because he alone fulfills the conditions of it, and because we, in laying hold on him, become partakers of all its benefits.

***~~2. To perform the work of salvation effectually in our behalf.~~***

Man being blinded by Satan and enslaved by sin, it was necessary that he should be enlightened with divine truth, and liberated from the dominion of his lusts. Accordingly Christ undertook to bring him forth into light, and liberty. In execution of his office he illuminated the Jewish Church by the revelations made to Moses and the prophets; and since that period he has been "a light to the Gentiles" also, even to the very ends of the earth.

Nor is it only by the outward manifestation of his truth that he instructs the world; he teaches men by his Spirit also; he "opens the eyes of the blind," and causes them to "see out of obscurity and out of darkness." By the same Spirit also, he enables them to burst the chains with which they are bound, and to come forth from their dungeons in which they are immured. As in delivering Peter from his prison, where he lay sleeping on the night preceding his intended execution, he caused the light to shine in upon him, and his chains to fall off, and the prison doors to fly open of their own accord! [Acts 12:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.1-10). Just so, now he delivers the souls of men, "turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God! [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)."

All this is Christ's covenanted work; he performs it to consequence of his own engagements; and he will perform it as long as there shall continue one on whose behalf the mighty working of his power shall be necessary.

***~~II. In the text we notice His ability to execute his commission.~~***

We cannot doubt of this, when we are informed,

***~~1. By whom he was called to it.~~***

The *Father*gives in this place a glorious description of his own majesty, as the Creator of Heaven and earth, yes of man also, with his animal life, his rational faculties, and his immortal soul. Nor is this description without a very important meaning, as introductory to the commission given to his Son; because it shows us by what high authority his Son acted, and how certainly his undertaking shall be effectual for the end designed.

"So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father!" [Hebrews 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.5). The Father "called him in righteousness." In execution of his own righteous purpose, and in accomplishment of his righteous promises, he gave him this commission. He called him when first he entered into covenant with him; and again, when he provided him a body for the discharge of his office; and again, when by an audible voice from Heaven he testified, "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

From these repeated calls we are assured, that Christ was fully authorized to undertake our cause, and that in all that he did and suffered for us he was accepted by his heavenly Father.

***~~2. By whom Jesus was assisted in it.~~***

The trials which Jesus met with from man, though exceedingly great, might have been borne; but when he conflicted with all the powers of darkness, and sustained all the weight of his Fathers wrath, he must have sunk under the load, had not his almighty Father supported him. But never did he lack effectual aid. He complained of dereliction indeed in his most trying hour; but this dereliction related only to the sensible presence of his Father, whereby he might have been comforted; that which was necessary for his support, was never withdrawn; the Father had said to him, "I will hold your hand, and will keep you;" and never for one moment was he forgetful of his promise.

But this promise was not confined to the period of Christ's existence upon earth; it includes also a concurrence with him in his work, even to the end of the world. What then can be lacking, when the Father and the Son are ever combining their efforts for the salvation of men? None, however blind, need to despair of beholding the light. None, however riveted in bonds, need despair of attaining liberty.

***~~We cannot close this subject without suggesting some obvious reflections.~~***

***~~1. How deeply are we savingly interested in the covenant of grace!~~***

It is generally imagined, that the mysterious engagements between the Father and the Son are merely speculative points, in which mankind are little interested. But what can be conceived more interesting than the offices of Christ, or his ability to fulfill them? Would people destitute of vision, or imprisoned and under sentence of death, feel no interest in the inquiry, whether they could find relief, or whether one professing to offer it were able to fulfill his Word?

On the covenant of redemption rests all our hope. If Christ is not *authorized*to save us, his good-will towards us will be to little purpose. If he is not *qualified*, his endeavors will be all in vain.

Let us then acquaint ourselves with the proper grounds of our hope. Let us consider the parties contracting, and the engagements which they have respectively entered into; and let us lay hold on that "covenant as all our salvation and all our desire! [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)."

***~~2. What encouragement have all to embrace that covenant!~~***

Are any people ready to apprehend that they are excluded from it as unworthy? Behold the provisions of the covenant itself! See for whose benefit it is particularly designed! Are we not only in darkness, but blind also? Are we enslaved, and so fast bound in prison that we cannot come forth? We then are the very people for whose sake the Son of God became incarnate, and for whose relief both his and his Father's honor are mutually pledged.

Let none then listen to such unfounded apprehensions; but rather let every one remember, that Christ is given for a covenant to the whole Gentile world; and that the more desperate our condition be, the more will God be glorified in our acceptance of his offered mercy!

***~~#929~~***

***~~GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE OPENED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 42:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.16)~~***

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them!"

God has fore-ordained everything which he himself will do, [Acts 15:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.18); and he has been gradually unfolding his designs from the beginning. The restoration of the Jews from Babylon, and the calling of the Gentiles into the Church, were very wonderful events—but in them the prediction before us was fulfilled; it receives a further accomplishment yet daily. We may take occasion from it to observe,

**I. All of God's dealings are mysterious.**

***~~The dispensations of his providence have been at all times dark.~~***

How ill-judged (according to human estimate) was the direction given to the Israelites at their departure from Egypt, [Exodus 14:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.2-3). Yet it eventually led to their more complete deliverance, [Exodus 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.17); [Exodus 14:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.23); [Exodus 14:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.28).

How strange do their long wanderings in the wilderness appear! Yet God conducted them by the *right*way! [Psalm 107:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.7). [Deuteronomy 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 8.2). The present dispersion of the Jews shall enhance the mercy and the glory of their restoration. Their degradation shall issue in their fullness, [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.31).

***~~The dispensations of his grace are equally inscrutable.~~***

This is seen in the first quickening of men from their spiritual death. God sets their sins in array before them. He charges home their guilt upon their consciences. He threatens them with his eternal wrath and indignation.*Who would conceive that these were tokens of his love?*How little did the three thousand, when pierced to the heart, imagine that joy was so near at hand? [Acts 2:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.37). How little could the jailor, when about to commit suicide, have supposed that his terror was the first dawn of mercy to his soul? [Acts 16:27-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.27-29). Thus are many still brought to Christ "in a way which they knew not."

***~~God's mysterious dealings appear in their subsequent spiritual life.~~***

Men usually expect to be led on in a way of peace and joy. But God often leaves them to feel the depravity of their own hearts. He sometimes permits them to be "in heaviness through manifold temptations." He allows also many heavy calamities to befall them. They seem, at times, as though they would be overwhelmed. They frequently are brought to the borders of despair. Yet these are ways which God takes to humble and to prove them.

Who could have thought that *Peter's*fall should be overruled for good? Yet perhaps nothing else would ever have purged out his self-confidence.

The buffetings of Satan were earnestly deprecated by *Paul*, [2 Corinthians 12:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.8); yet were they necessary to prevent the workings of pride! [2 Corinthians 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.7).

How true is that observation of the *Psalmist*, "Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen! [Psalm 77:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.19)." The more we contemplate God's dealings with his people, the more shall we exclaim with the Apostle, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.33)."

In every dispensation, especially as it respects his people, we may say,

***~~II. His intentions are merciful.~~***

The perplexities of his people are often very great; but God has gracious designs in all, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future! [Jeremiah 29:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 29.11)."

We may see this remark exemplified in the case of Job. How heavy and accumulated were the trials that came on him! He himself, in his haste, accused God of cruelty! [Job 10:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.3); [Job 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.16). But the end showed that God sent those trials in love! [Job 42:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.12-13) with [James 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.11).

The case of Joseph also deserves attention in this view. God intended to make him lord over his brethren, [Genesis 37:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 37.6-10). But, instead of being advanced, he was sold as a slave, [Genesis 37:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 37.28). Afterwards he was imprisoned as guilty of a capital offence, [Genesis 39:17-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 39.17-20). He was above twenty years without ever hearing of his brethren. *Yet we see at last the designs of God accomplished by the very means which appeared most calculated to defeat them.*

***~~The same mercy is discoverable in God's dealings with all his afflicted people.~~***

He allows their path to be for a time dark and intricate. But he invisibly directs and manages their concerns. He gradually removes their difficulties, and clears up their doubts.

If he shuts them up under the law, it is that they may embrace the offers of his Gospel! [Galatians 3:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.23-24).

If he *prunes*them as a vine, it is to augment their fruitfulness [John 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.2).

If he *refines*them as with fire, it is to advance the purification of their souls! [Malachi 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.3).

Thus he constrains them to acknowledge with the Psalmist, "Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne!" [Psalm 97:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 97.2)."

They indeed are often ready to doubt his love. But,

***~~III. His regards are permanent.~~***

God did not forget his people when they were in Babylon, and neither will he now "forsake" those who trust in him.

He may appear for a season to have forsaken them, [Isaiah 54:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.7-8). They may be left to complain as though he had quite forgotten them, [Isaiah 49:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14-16). But his having made them his people is a reason why he will not recede from his gracious purposes, [1 Samuel 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 12.22). The Apostle was confident that God would complete his works of grace, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6).

He will continue firm and unchangeable in his regards to them.

The prophets declare this in the strongest terms, [Isaiah 54:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.9-10). [Jeremiah 31:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.37); [Jeremiah 32:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40). Paul abundantly confirms their testimony, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29). He commends this truth to us as a ground of cheerful confidence in the most trying seasons, [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5-6).

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. How careful should we be not to pass a hasty judgment on the Lord's dealings!~~***

We are too ready under trials, to exclaim with Jacob, "Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me! [Genesis 42:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 42.36)." Yet the trials we complain of may be, as in his case, the necessary means of our preservation. It is the part of a believer to wait with patience for the outcome, [Isaiah 28:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.16)."

***~~2. How safely may we commit ourselves to God's disposal!~~***

*God alone knows what is best for us! He knows, too, how to accomplish his designs in the best manner. Let us therefore commit all our concerns to him, [Psalm 37:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.5). Let us lie as clay in the potter's hands, [Jeremiah 18:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 18.6).*In whatever distress we are, let us follow the prophet's direction, "Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God! [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10)."

***~~#930~~***

***~~GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 43:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.1-3)~~***

KJV. "Now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and he who formed you, O Israel, Do not fear; for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

NIV. "But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!"

It is almost impossible for anyone to read the Holy Scriptures with attention, and not to notice the very remarkable manner in which many of the richest promises are introduced. God seems, in them, determined to magnify his own grace; and to show, that "where sin has abounded, his grace shall much more abound! [Romans 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20)."

Let anyone read the two last verses of the preceding chapter, and then pass on to the promise which I have just read; and he will see this illustrated in a very striking point of view. The Jews, to this day, experience the mercy and the faithfulness of God in his wonderful preservation of them, in order to a richer display of his goodness towards them than they have ever yet known, verse 4-7. In the same way, all the servants of Jehovah, in every age, may be assured of similar protection, in order to their present and eternal welfare.

In opening the words before us, we will notice,

***~~I. What is here supposed respecting the people of God.~~***

*It is taken for granted that they shall be a suffering people*, according to what is spoken by the Prophet Zephaniah, "I will leave in the midst of you an afflicted and poor people, [Zephaniah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.12)." In a greater or less degree this is the state of all; they have to pass through deep waters, and even, as it were, through the fire itself, in the service of their God. Sometimes they are afflicted by *persecution*, and sometimes by *temptation*; for both to *men*and *devils*are they objects of inveterate hostility.

From the days of Cain to this very hour, have "those who were born after the flesh persecuted those who were born after the Spirit! [Galatians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.29);" nor can any "who will live godly in Christ Jesus hope to escape" their virulent assaults! [2 Timothy 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.12).

And where is there a child of God whom that great "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, does not labor to devour! [1 Peter 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8)." There is not one who has not "some *thorn*in the flesh, some messenger of Satan to buffet him, [Psalm 91:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 91.15)."

Look at all the most favored servants of the Lord—at Job, and Heman, and Asaph, and David, and Paul; and you will find them all "chosen in the furnace of affliction, even as our blessed Lord himself, who was pre-eminently a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief! [Isaiah 53:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.3)." Indeed there is a necessity for this; because there is in all the servants of God much dross, which needs the fire of affliction to purge it away; and it is in the furnace that they learn the evil of their own hearts, and the power and efficacy of divine grace; it is under tribulation chiefly, that they acquire "patience and experience, and a hope that shall never make them ashamed, [Romans 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.5)."

But, however painful their state, they have abundant consolation in,

**II. What is here promised to them.**

God will be with his people under all their trials; as he has said, "I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him." He will be with his people both by the *manifestations of his presence*and the *communications of his grace*; so that, under their severest afflictions, they shall have abundant support. Remarkable is that expression of the Psalmist, "You shall hide them in the secret of your presence! [Psalm 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 31.20)." The man that is in the presence of his God, and has the light of his countenance lifted up upon him, is inaccessible to his enemies, and may laugh at all their assaults.

See Paul and Silas in prison, under circumstances as painful as could well be inflicted on them; yet, behold, they are singing praises to God at midnight! And see the Hebrew Youths in the furnace into which an infuriated tyrant had cast them, "not so much as a hair of their head was singed, or even the smell of fire had passed on them." Such are the interpositions of God in behalf of all his faithful servants, that "where their afflictions have abounded, their consolations have much more abounded! 2 Corinthians 1:5."

The very waves which desolated all the world besides, bore up the ark, and carried it to a place of safety. And so shall the sea itself afford a passage to all the "ransomed of the Lord to pass over," in the way to the land of promise, [Isaiah 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.10).

But let not this be taken upon my word. Let David speak, from actual experience, "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance! [Psalm 66:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 66.10-12)."

Of the fulfillment of this promise we can entertain no doubt, when we consider,

***~~III. The ground upon which the promise is made.~~***

It is pleasing to observe with what satisfaction God contemplates the relation in which he stands to his people, and with what delight he expatiates upon it, "But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!"

Here is abundant security to us for the accomplishment of every word that God has spoken. For he takes a saving interest in his people, such as a man feels in reference to his dearest possessions. *He puts them, we will say, into the furnace*. But will he leave them there without any concern about them? No, "he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," to watch the process, and to bring them forth the very instant that his gracious designs are wrought upon them; so that they may come forth "as vessels of honor, fit for their Master's use! [Malachi 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.3)."

Are they "a vineyard which his right hand has planted?" "He will keep it, and water it every moment; lest any hurt it, he will keep it night and day, [Isaiah 27:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.3).' *No parent can sympathize with his afflicted child more tenderly than he did with his people under their trials*, "In all their affliction he was afflicted; and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old! [Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9)."

In a word, they are his children; and therefore he enters so affectionately into all their concerns, "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him, declares the LORD, [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20)."

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. What consolation does the Gospel of Christ afford!~~***

In the Old Testament we have those very promises of which we have spoken. But it is the Gospel which gives us the full insight into them.

We behold in the Old Testament the redemption of Israel from Egypt, and their ultimate establishment in the land of Canaan. But these were a mere *shadow*of the redemption that has been wrought for us by Christ, and of those spiritual mercies which are given to us in our way to the Canaan that is above. These are, above all, to be noticed. These give us the true insight into the mystery of the burning bush, [Exodus 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.2). Not the Church at large only, but every true believer is that burning bush, in whom God shall to all eternity be glorified! "Tribulation is appointed for us as our way, [Acts 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 14.22);" but most glorious shall be our end! [Revelation 7:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.14-15).

***~~2. How needful for us is it that we obtain a saving interest in Christ!~~***

It is in Christ alone that these promises are made to us, [2 Corinthians 1:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.20). If we are in him, the promises, and all that they contain, are ours! [1 Corinthians 3:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.21-23)." Let us be able to say with David, "The Lord is my shepherd;" and then we may safely add, "When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your (pastoral) rod and staff, they comfort me! [Psalm 23:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.1-4)."

***~~#931~~***

***~~THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN~~***

***~~[Isaiah 43:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.4)~~***

"Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you!"

Few have any conception how close the analogy is between God's dealings with his people of old, and his conduct towards his Church and people in the present day. In truth, we scarcely know how to admit that God will manifest such condescension to us as he did to them. But it can never be thought that the Christian Church is less privileged than the Jewish; or that God will manifest less grace towards those whom he has redeemed through the blood of his Son, than he did towards those whom he delivered from a mere temporal captivity.

True, indeed, his interpositions may be, and in fact are, less visible; but they are not a whit less real than in the days of old. Connect this chapter with the last two verses of the preceding chapter; and you will see how God still magnifies his grace and mercy towards us, when we have reason to expect nothing but his wrathful indignation. Examine the passage in this view; and compare it with verse 1, which marks distinctly how they came to be "precious in God's sight."

So, in like manner, we may behold in the text itself to what an exalted state the true Christian is raised. We cannot but acknowledge the truth of God's appeal to them in the words which I have just read; and the same expressions are equally applicable to his people in every age and place. If we understand the passage aright, we may clearly see in it the rise and progress of the Christian's calling.

Let us notice,

***~~I. The origin of the Christian's high calling.~~***

***~~Whence and how were the Jews exalted to their unrivaled eminence?~~***

Were they selected by God either for their number or their superior goodness? No! They were "the fewest of all people," and equal to any in depravity! It was altogether an act of sovereign grace when "God chose them, and set his love on them, and made them his special people." "He loved them, because he would love them! See [Deuteronomy 7:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.6-8); [Deuteronomy 9:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.4-6)."

Hence he reminds them of their origin, under the image of an infant just born into the world of heathen parents, without anyone to administer to its necessities, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. "'Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" Indeed I said to you while you were in your blood, "Live!" [Ezekiel 16:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.3-6)."

And by Isaiah he reminds them of this saying, "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many, [Isaiah 51:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.1-2)." Such was their state when God chose them to himself, "to be a special people to him, above all upon the face of the earth;" and set them apart, as "his treasured possession, [Exodus 19:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 19.5-6)," and "his jewels, [Malachi 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.17)," and "his portion and inheritance, [Deuteronomy 32:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.9)."

Thus we see clearly whence their greatness arose; and how it came to pass that "they were exalted above all the nations of the earth, in name, and in honor, and in praise! [Deuteronomy 26:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 26.18-19)."

***~~And why is it that any of us are "precious in God's sight?"~~***

Is it on account of any superior goodness in us that God has chosen us? Surely there is not a man on earth so presumptuous as to affirm, or so ignorant as to imagine, that God chose him, in preference to others, on account of his own superior worth and excellence.

I have said that there is, especially in reference to this matter, a strict analogy between the Jews and us; and Peter marks it with peculiar force, quoting the very words which I have before cited, as applied by Moses to the Jewish people, and applying them to believers under the Christian dispensation, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a special people! [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)." Beyond all doubt we are as much debtors to the sovereign grace of God as ever the Jews were; and it is astonishing that so many well-disposed people should be averse to acknowledge it. We see, readily enough, how predestination and election operated in relation to the Jews; and yet we find it difficult to acknowledge their operation in reference to ourselves. But "God has chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world;" and "has predestined us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself! [Ephesians 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-5);" precisely as he chose them, and predestined them to the enjoyment of their privileges. To the grace of God alone we must trace it, if any of us are "precious in God's sight [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8-9)." We must acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as "the Author of our faith, no less than the finisher [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2);" and "when the top-stone shall be brought forth, to complete God's temple in our hearts," we, like all the prophets and apostles that have been before us, must cry, "Grace, grace unto it! [Zechariah 4:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.6-7)."

The rise of the Christian's calling having been pointed out, let us proceed to trace,

***~~II. The progress of the Christian's high calling.~~***

The advancement of God's people now corresponds exactly with that of his ancient people:

***~~1. In honor.~~***

Since the Jews had been precious in God's sight, they were honorable, They were honorable in themselves, as being elevated to a higher character than any other people in the universe. What other people were ever distinguished with such a code of laws as they? [Deuteronomy 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.7-8). Or in what other country under Heaven did people attain to an equality with the Patriarchs in righteousness and true holiness?

They were honorable also in God's sight; for they were watched over by him, as if there had not been any other people in the world; and were regarded by him altogether as the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

In the sight of surrounding nations, also, they were honorable; for they all confessed that "God was with them of a truth; and every Jew could exult over them, saying, Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges, [Deuteronomy 32:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.31)."

The same elevation is given to God's people, also, at the present day. In themselves, they are "made partakers of the divine nature, [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.4)," and are "changed into the Divine image, [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24)," and "shine as lights in a dark world, [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15)." In God's estimation, they are "his dear children," the very spouse of his only-begotten Son, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," preserved by him here "as the apple of his eye," and reserved for thrones and kingdoms in the eternal world!

And in the eyes of the ungodly world, too, are they honorable. For though the world may treat them as "the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things," fit only to be swept away in the most ignominious manner from the face of the earth, and even to be sacrificed to devils—yet do they reverence them in their hearts; even as "Herod feared John, because he was a holy and just man [Mark 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 6.20)."

An ungodly man feels restraint in the presence of a true Christian, and cannot give loose to his wicked propensities as he would do in his absence. However an ungodly man may hate and revile a true Christian, he has a secret wish in his heart that be could exchange conditions with him, especially in the eternal world. However averse a man may be to live the life of the righteous, there is no one who would not be glad to "die his death, and to have his last end like his."

Say, then, whether this is not to be truly "honorable?" Truly, not a king upon his throne is so truly honorable as the man who is brought into vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified in his soul by the Spirit of the Living God.

***~~2. In happiness.~~***

"Happy are you, O Israel; who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and the sword of your excellency! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)." If this was spoken of the Jews because of the love which God bore to them, what must be said of us, whom "he has loved, even as he loves his only-begotten Son! [John 17:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.23); [John 17:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.26)." Who can tell what it is to be favored with "the spirit of adoption"—or what it is to "have the witness of the Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God?" Who can tell what it is to "have the love of God shed abroad in the heart," and to "be filled with the Spirit?" Truly, these things constitute "that white stone, on which is that new name written, which no man knows, but he who has received it, [Revelation 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.17)." It is, in fact, a pledge and foretaste of Heaven itself, [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14).

See how the love of God to his ancient people was displayed; how "God gave Egypt for their ransom, yes, and Ethiopia and Seba too, verse 3." Whole nations were of no more account with God than the dust of the summer threshing-floor, if they stood in the way of their welfare, [Isaiah 41:11-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.11-16). And so shall it be again, when they shall be restored to their own land, "the nation and kingdom that will not serve them shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted, [Isaiah 60:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.12)."

Let it not be thought that God will do less for his Church and people at this day. No, truly, "the gates of Hell shall never prevail against them;" "no weapon formed against them shall ever prosper;" but every enemy, and "Satan himself at the head of them, shall be put under their feet shortly;" and so attentive will God be to their welfare, that every dispensation, whether of his providence or grace, shall be ordered with a view to it, and "all things, however unfavorable their aspect, be overruled to promote it! [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.28).

***~~Two things, then, I ask of you, my beloved brethren:~~***

***~~1. Endeavor to form a just estimate of your high calling.~~***

The apostle Paul calls this "a *holy*calling, [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9)," a *heavenly*calling, [Hebrews 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.1)," yes, "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, [Philippians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.14)." The least reflection on what has been already spoken must convince you, that "the riches of it" are inestimable, incomprehensible, and "unsearchable! [Ephesians 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.18); [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8)."

Christians live far below their privileges. They are too exclusively occupied (I do not say too intensely), in viewing their remaining imperfections, and the greatness of the work that still remains to be wrought in them. *They do not soar in contemplating the wonders which God has already wrought for them, and those which he has pledged himself yet further to accomplish*. Hence they are kept in a low state of bondage, instead of being "brought into the full liberty of the children of God." But read the Epistles of Paul, my brethren; read, especially, his prayers, and see how he soars in his contemplation of *God's unbounded mercies, and of the Christian's exalted privileges!*[Ephesians 1:3-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.3-14). It is by such meditation on these things, that we shall rise above all our spiritual enemies, and by such views we shall "be filled with all the fullness of God, [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)." O, brethren, know your privileges as believers in Christ; and live in the sweet enjoyment of them; for there are no bounds to the honor and the happiness which God will confer on those who are "precious in his sight" as his redeemed people!

**2. Endeavor, also, to walk worthy of** **your high calling.**

This was Paul's earnest entreaty to the Ephesian and Philippian Churches, when he was a prisoner at Rome. He did not desire their interposition to get him liberated; all he had to request of them was, that "their conduct should be such as befit the Gospel of Christ [Ephesians 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.1), [Philippians 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.27)." And indeed this was the great object of his ministry at all times, "You know," says he to the Thessalonian Church, "how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory! 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12."

In the same manner would I now entreat you; yes, as a father with his children, would I charge you, that you "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, [Colossians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.10)," and "adorning the doctrine of God your Savior in all things, [Titus 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.10)." Only reflect on your high privileges; and then say, "what manner of people you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, [2 Peter 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.11)." I conclude with that inspired admonition, "As he who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conduct; because it is written, be holy; for I am holy! 1 Peter 1:15-16."

***~~#932~~***

***~~THE SAINTS ARE WITNESSES FOR GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 43:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.12)~~***

"You are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God!"

God is a jealous God, and cannot endure that any other should be put in competition with him. Hence he takes frequent occasion to reprove the idolatry into which his people were ever prone to relapse. He shows them the *folly*of cutting down a tree, and kindling a fire with part of the wood, and roasting their food with it, and then fashioning another part of the same tree into the image of a man, and bowing down to it as a God. He challenges them and all the world to bring any single instance of such senseless idols having ever revealed things that were long past and forgotten, or of their having ever foretold future events, or effected for their votaries any signal deliverance. He appeals to them, that He had done these things for them; and that therefore they themselves were witnesses for him, that he was the only true God!

A similar appeal may properly be made to the people of God at this day. They have within themselves very convincing proofs of his exclusive right to universal adoration:

***~~I. In what he has taught them.~~***

He has given them such views of Divine truth as they could not possibly obtain from any other quarter. He has shown them,

***~~1. The depravity of their nature.~~***

Others may profess in words that they are fallen creatures; but whoever learned, from more study, or the instructions of man—that his "heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" Who ever so learned it, as really to "abhor himself in dust and ashes?" But God does teach all his people this lesson; and all who have learned it, are therefore living witnesses of his almighty power and grace.

***~~2. The excellency of Christ.~~***

To compliment Christ with honorable titles is common enough. But who can open a man's eyes, so that he shall "behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus?" Yet this is done for all the Lord's people. To every one of them "Christ is truly precious!" In this respect therefore they are witnesses that their teacher is the omnipotent Jehovah.

***~~3. The beauty of holiness.~~***

However some particular virtues may be admired in the world, the holiness which the Gospel requires is odious in their eyes.

Penitence is considered as melancholy;  
devotion is considered as hypocrisy;  
zeal for God is considered as enthusiasm;  
and an expectation of glory is considered as consummate pride and presumption.

And who can alter their views? Not an Apostle, nor even an angel from Heaven. They might be silenced; but nothing less than Omnipotence can so change their opinions, as to make them in love with a spiritual and heavenly life. But the child of God sees that such a life is the perfection of bliss, a very Heaven upon earth! Herein also is a witness, that the God whom he serves is the only true God.

But the children of God are also living witnesses of his power and Godhead:

***~~II. In what he has done for them.~~***

We acknowledge the creation to be an evidence that the Maker thereof is God; and so likewise is the work which God has wrought in his saints.

***~~1. He has created them anew.~~***

The change that takes place in conversion is not an outward and superficial change, but an inward and radical change. It is "a new birth," a "renovation of the inward man after the image of God!"

But where is the power that can effect this? Let *philosophy*try her powers; let *reason*exert herself, "the old man," the corrupt principles of nature, will laugh at them, and defy their utmost exertions!

But is not this change actually wrought in thousands? We grant, that in many who have professed to have experienced it—it is but very imperfectly produced. Yes, and that many who think it has been wrought in them only deceive their own souls; but all the Apostles were not like Judas; nor are all professors of religion hypocrites. *Take then the upright and consistent Christian, and tell me whether any power on earth can produce such a character?*if not, he is a witness for God, that HE alone is worthy of our hope and dependence.

***~~2. He has elevated them above the world.~~***

There is among the professors of religion so great a diversity of attainment, and we are so little able to judge respecting the secret experience of their hearts—that we cannot with any certainty form our estimate of the Christian character from what we see around us; we must go to the inspired volume, and take that as the only standard of Christian experience.

Now we know that Christians are there represented as "not being of the world, any more than Christ himself was of the world;" and we see there examples of people altogether "crucified to the world," to its cares, its pleasures, and to everything that is in it.

That there are but few Christians in the present day who have arrived at the Scripture standard, we confess with grief and shame; and it will be well if many of them do not find themselves awfully mistaken, when they shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ! But the truth is the same, whether few or many experience it; and *it is a certain fact, that every child of God is delivered from the love of this present evil world*; and the fewness of those whose lives correspond with their professions, tends to prove, rather than to disprove, the point we have affirmed. For, where shall we find one person truly elevated above the world, unless among those who have been born of God? Some may be found who are dissatisfied with the world, and who from age or other circumstances find no relish for it; but if they were put into a capacity to enjoy the world as they once did, their love of it would be found as strong as ever! We defy the whole world to produce one, who by the mere powers of reason has been raised above the world; and this is a decisive proof that *the deadness to the world which true Christians experience, is the work of an Almighty arm!*

***~~3. He has filled them with spiritual peace and joy.~~***

The peace and joy which the unconverted man possesses, will vanish at the prospect of death and judgment; or if under the influences of deluded hopes they retain a confidence, the peace flowing from that confidence is as different from that which is "the fruit of the Spirit," as the ravings of a maniac are from the suggestions of sober reason. But the true Christian has "a peace that passes all understanding," and "a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory!" Whence does he obtain this? Who but God can give it to him? Or who can take it away, when God has given it to him? Here then again is he a witness for God, that his power and grace are infinite.

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~Those who idolatrously exalt the creature.~~***

See the challenge given by God himself in verses 8 and 9. Produce the people that have obtained from any but Jehovah, either this *knowledge*, or this *experience*. We defy the whole universe. "Bring forth your witnesses, that you may be justified; or else hear and acknowledge, that what we have affirmed is truth." The more you examine the pretensions of any who profess to have acquired these things by their own power, the more evidence you will have that God alone can produce them in the souls of men!

***~~2. Those who profess to be Christians indeed.~~***

Remember that it is your duty and office to be "witnesses for God." You are to be "as lights in a dark world, and as a city upon a hill."

Be then voluntary witnesses. Wicked men, and even the devils themselves, are in some sense witnesses for him; they attest, though against their will, that his representations of the human heart are true, and that he is a God of infinite patience, majesty, and power! But you are intentionally to make your light shine before men, and to convince them by the holiness of your lives that "God is with you in truth."

Be also steadfast witnesses. You will find many temptations to "put your light under a bushel;" but you must be resolute in glorifying God, whether by life or by death.

Further, be also consistent witnesses. The world will judge, not by your words, but by your actions; and if they see these to be at variance with each other, they will rather harden themselves in their infidelity, and adduce your testimony as adverse to God. See to it then that you walk in all things "holily, justly, and unblamably;" and "those who who are on the contrary path may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

Lastly, for your encouragement, think what witnesses you shall one day be for God in Heaven! How will you there proclaim and manifest his power and grace! O blessed day! Look forward to it with joy; and prepare for it by increasing zeal in the service of your God.

***~~#933~~***

***~~GOD'S KINDNESS TO HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 43:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.20-21)~~***

"I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise!"

*The mercies of God which are daily, and, as it were, hourly renewed—demand at our hands a constantly increasing tribute of praise and thanksgiving.*Former benefits are not to be forgotten; yet it is allowable, and even proper, that those which have been recently given to us should so occupy the mind, as, for a time, almost to exclude from our minds the immediate recollection of those which have been formerly bestowed.

The Prophet Jeremiah says, "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.'" [Jeremiah 23:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.7-8)."

Thus in the verses before our text, God says, "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old; behold, I will do a new thing." The particular thing here predicted, is, the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, together with their preservation in the dry and barren wilderness, through which they must pass in their way to Judea. But that deliverance would never have been represented as so superior to that which they had experienced from Egypt, had it not typified a far more glorious redemption, which they were taught to expect through the intervention of the Messiah. This it is (even the spiritual redemption by Christ, together with the aids and consolations of the Holy Spirit) to which the text principally refers; and for which, not "the owls and jackels" of the wilderness, but the more stupid and ferocious Gentiles "shall honor God" forever.

In discoursing on these words, we shall consider:

***~~I. The designation given to God's people.~~***

The minds of many almost revolt at the very mention of the word "elect," or "chosen." But though we by no means approve of bringing forward the subject of election on every occasion—yet, as it is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, and strongly asserted in the Articles of our Church, we ought not to pass over it, when it comes plainly and unavoidably before us.

***~~1. The word "chosen" is used in the text as a term of sovereign distinction.~~***

No one can doubt but that God's people are often spoken of by the term of "God's elect;" the only doubt is, what that term imports.

Now all will confess that it imports a choice of nations to the enjoyment of national privileges. In this sense God chose the Jewish nation, and took them out from the midst of a people greater and mightier than they, and gave them his statutes and judgments, when all other nations were left to follow their own ways. And this he did, not on account of any merit in them, but purely on account of his own good pleasure, irrespective of any goodness in them, either seen or foreseen, [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.7-8); [Deuteronomy 9:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.4-6).

It is no less clear, that the term is also applied to individual people chosen to particular situations of trust and honor. Levi's appointment to the priesthood, [1 Samuel 2:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.27-28), David's to the government of Israel, [Psalm 78:70-71](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.70-71), and Saul's to the apostleship, [Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.15). [Galatians 1:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.15-16)—are unquestionable proofs of God's having exercised his own sovereign will in the selection of individuals to posts of temporal dignity. I may add too, of unspeakable spiritual advantage.

These things being admitted, it seems strange that anyone can doubt, but that the term "elect" also may denote a choice of particular people to eternal life. The people of God are not merely called "elect," but are expressly said to have been "from the beginning chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth! [2 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13)." And for them in particular, is Heaven reserved; insomuch that "Jesus Christ himself cannot grant Heaven to any but those for whom it was before prepared by the Father [Matthew 20:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.23)."

**2.** **The word "chosen" is used in the text as a term of endearment.**

This seems the more particular view in which the name is given to God's people in the text. Just as, in reference to his dear Son, God says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect, in whom my soul delights, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1)," so he speaks of his people here, as feeling delight in them.

In many other passages also the term "elect" seems to be used as expressive of the peculiar interest which God takes in all that relates to his believing people, "Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Shall not God avenge his own elect?" "For the elect's sake those days (of trouble to Jerusalem) shall be shortened." And, "God will send his angels (at the last day) to gather together his elect."

But, notwithstanding their dearness to God, we have but too much reason to consider:

***~~II. The straits to which they may be reduced.~~***

It is evidently implied, that as the Israelites in their journey from Egypt must have perished for lack of water, if God had not miraculously interposed for their relief; so all his people coming through the wilderness of this world, are at times reduced to difficulties, from whence none but God himself can deliver them. This happens to them by means of:

***~~1. Afflictions.~~***

The people of God are, for the most part, "a poor and afflicted people." That they have peculiar supports and consolations, we shall soon show; but inasmuch as they have all the common feelings of humanity, they must find afflictions grievous to them, exactly as others do. Even the most eminent saints have at times been ready to sink under their burdens.

Behold *David*on the death of his rebellious son, Absalom; how bitterly he bewailed his loss! [2 Samuel 18:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 18.33).

See *Hezekiah*under the pressure of what he supposed to be an incurable disease; how "he mourned like a dove, and his eyes failed with looking upward, [Isaiah 38:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.10-14)."

Thus it is with many under the loss of dear relatives, or the pressure of poverty, or the agonies of an acute disorder—they are ready to faint under their trials, and to be "weary even of life itself! See [Psalm 107:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.5); [Psalm 107:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.10); [Psalm 107:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.18); [Psalm 107:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.26-27); [Psalm 38:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.1-8); [Psalm 42:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.7) and [Job 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.1)."

***~~2. Persecutions.~~***

Fitly is persecution compared to the scorching heat of the meridian sun. We are told what fatal effects it produces on those who have no root of grace in themselves, [Matthew 13:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.6); [Matthew 13:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.21). The most steadfast Christians are exhorted to "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest they should be weary and faint in their minds, [Hebrews 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.3)." Even the Apostle Paul himself was sometimes "cast down, [2 Corinthians 4:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.8-9)," and needed peculiar supports from Heaven, [Acts 18:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.9-10). See also [Psalm 143:3-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 143.3-8).

And though we are not now exposed to all those cruelties which the first Christians endured—yet there are many and heavy trials to be borne by "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus;" and he must be a faithful laborer, who supports without fainting "the burden and heat of the day."

***~~3. Temptations.~~***

It is not without reason that the weapons with which Satan assaults the believer are represented as "fiery darts;" for when injected into the soul, they set the whole man, as it were, on fire, and "the poison of them altogether drinks up our spirits! [Job 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 6.4)." Who has ever known what it is to be:  
haunted with atheistical and blasphemous thoughts;  
harassed with doubts about the truth of Christianity;  
tormented with apprehensions of having committed the unpardonable sin?

Who that has ever felt the almost irresistible impulses of inward corruption, aided by the dreadful workings of despair; who, in short, is in any respect acquainted with the wiles of Satan, and the depths of his own depravity—and has not been constrained to cry, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me!"

But these troubles shall only bring them to the enjoyment of,

***~~III. The mercies reserved for them.~~***

As once God made the rivers and the sea to become dry land—so will he open rivers in the dry and thirsty wilderness. He will supply the needs of his drooping and dejected people. He has treasured up for them an inexhaustible fund of consolation:

***~~1. In the promises of his Gospel.~~***

What "wells of salvation" are opened in the holy Scriptures! and with what unspeakable joy do thirsting souls "draw water out of them!" A believing application of one single promise to the soul is more reviving, even in the most disconsolate state, than any cup of water can possibly be to one perishing with thirst.

Let, for instance, that consoling declaration which was made to Paul, when he complained so bitterly of the *thorn*in his flesh, and of the buffetings of Satan. Let that promise, I say, come home in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and the very same effects will instantly follow; our tears will be wiped away, and all our complaints be changed into triumphant exultations! [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9-10). See this further promised in [Hosea 2:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.14-15), and *exemplified*in [Psalm 32:2-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.2-7).

**2. In the communications of his grace.**

***~~It is principally with a view to increase and strengthen their graces, that God permits his people to experience so many troubles. He "chooses them in the furnace of affliction," and by means of the fire he "purges away their dross," that they may come forth as gold.~~***

Blessed is the testimony which David bears to this truth, [Psalm 138:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 138.3); and every believer will esteem his trials most richly recompensed, when he finds that "they have wrought in him an increase of patience, experience, and hope, [Romans 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.3-4)."

***~~3. In the manifestations of his love.~~***

Never does God grant such visits to his people, as when they are suffering for his sake, and in obedience to his will. "He will draw near unto them," and "manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world," and will give them "the witness of the Spirit, as a pledge of their everlasting inheritance." Thus, if their "*afflictions*abound for Christ, their *consolations*are made to abound by Christ, [2 Corinthians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.5)."

Now "in the Lord's favor is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life!" When therefore a sense of his "love is shed abroad in the heart," it little concerns them by what means so great a blessing has been imparted; whatever they may have endured to prepare them for it, they will not hesitate to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted!"

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

Is there any afflicted soul that cannot find consolation in God? He is only like Hagar, who had a fountain close to her, while she was expecting nothing but death! [Genesis 21:15-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 21.15-19). "Let him therefore, though in darkness, stay himself upon his God, [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10)." Sooner or later, all who wait on God shall be refreshed and comforted! [Isaiah 40:27-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-31); [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18); [Isaiah 44:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.3); [Isaiah 49:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.10).

***~~#934~~***

***~~THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S MERCY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 43:22-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.22-26)~~***

"Yet **you**have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, O Israel. You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your iniquities!

"**I**, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence!"

***~~The sinfulness of man, and the goodness of God, are subjects which mutually illustrate each other. Neither can they be viewed in their true colors, unless they are considered in their relation to the other. Both appear in their reality, only when they are brought into immediate contrast together.~~***

This is the view in which they are frequently presented to us in the holy Scriptures, and especially in the passage now before us; in which we have,

***~~I. A contrasted view of God's conduct towards us, and of ours towards him.~~***

***~~GOD has not required any oppressive services of us.~~***

God, as the author of our being, has a right to all our time, and all our faculties; but he requires of us only one day in seven, to be spent in his more immediate service. The law, which he imposed upon the Jews, appeared indeed burdensome, through the infirmity of their flesh; though, when considered in its true light, it ought not to have appeared so.

The law was necessary, in order to keep them separate from the heathen.

It was the means of directing their attention to the Messiah, and of preparing them for the fuller light and liberty of the Gospel.

It was also the means of their maintaining communion with God, and of obtaining his richest blessings.

As for us, we are wholly freed from that yoke, and have only two easy and significant rites to observe. Nor is the moral law burdensome; for the whole substance of it is: Be holy, and be happy! [Romans 7:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.12); and if a permission were given us to violate anyone of its commands, it would be, in fact, a dispensation to make ourselves miserable.

***~~But WE have been backward to offer him any token of respect and love.~~***

The Jews grudged to purchase a little calamus for the holy perfume and incense, [Exodus 30:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 30.23); [Exodus 30:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 30.25); [Exodus 30:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 30.34-35). Nor, if they brought any sacrifices, would they present the fat and good of their flocks—but rather, such as were lean and lame, [Malachi 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.8).

Thus have we been averse to "call upon him," being soon "weary" of that holy employment; or, if we have just waited upon God in his outward ordinances, we have withheld from him that which alone could render our services pleasing in his sight—the *tribute of a humble, contrite, and grateful heart*. *To mortify our lusts, and exercise devout and heavenly affections, would have cost us more pain and labor than we have been willing to give; we have therefore wholly declined such services, and contented ourselves with offering only the cheap sacrifices of external and occasional formalities.*

Yes, instead of serving him aright, we have even "wearied him with our iniquities!"

How awful the charge which God himself here brings against us! HE, who might justly demand anything of us, has not required of us any great services, or wearied us with an intolerable yoke—but WE, who are bound by every tie to please and honor him to the uttermost, have quite oppressed and wearied him by our long continued iniquities, until he is even "pressed under us, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, [Amos 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 2.13)."

There is scarcely an evil desire, which we have not harbored and indulged! Pride, envy, malice, revenge, covetousness, impurity, and whatever else is hateful unto God—have at all times found a ready admission into our hearts!

And if an outward restraint has been imposed upon our *actions*, it has not proceeded from a fear of God, [Romans 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.18), or a hatred of sin—but from a regard to our characters among men, and to the temporal consequences which we dreaded.

When we have known that our dispositions were offensive to God, we have not regarded him, any more than if he had been our slave who was constrained to bear whatever we might impose upon him! We have altogether despised him, [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4); [Psalm 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.13), as unworthy of our notice, and lived as though there were no such Being in the universe.

As astonishing as this contrast is, we shall be yet more astonished, while we consider:

***~~II. God's address to us, founded upon the foregoing representation.~~***

***~~The former part of God's address is a free and gracious promise of forgiveness.~~***

What might such rebels have expected, but to hear God say,  
"I will take revenge on my enemies and pay back my foes! [Isaiah 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.24)."  
"I swear in my wrath, that they shall never enter into my rest! [Psalm 95:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 95.10-11)."  
"My fury shall rest upon them! [Ezekiel 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 5.13)."

But, behold, how different is his voice!

"I, even I, whom you have so insulted, degraded, wearied;  
I, who could in an instant cast you into Hell, as I did the rebel angels;  
I, who might be glorified in your eternal condemnation;  
even I, am ready to blot out all your transgressions, as a morning cloud! Yes, I will blot them out through the blood of my dear Son! And though I might well "seal them up in a bag," and bring them forth at a future day to your everlasting punishment, I will no more remember them. They shall be perfectly blotted out, even as if they had never been committed!

"I well know, that if I seek for anything *in you*to justify such an act of mercy, I shall never find it. There is nothing in you but what calls for my wrath and fiery indignation! Yet I will not on this account, forbear to exercise mercy; I will pardon you for my own sake, that I may be glorified in displaying the exceeding riches of my grace!"

How infinitely does this surpass our highest conceptions! And how obdurate must be the heart that can withstand these overtures of love and mercy!

***~~The latter part of the address is an urgent invitation to accept of mercy.~~***

It may possibly be understood as a rebuke to a proud self-justifying Pharisee. Many, instead of humbling themselves under the charge brought against them, will instantly reply, "Wherein have we wearied you? [Malachi 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 2.17)." To such God may be considered as saying, 'Since you plead your innocence, [Jeremiah 2:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.35), and stand on your own defense, as though you did not need this offer of mercy—come, and "put me in remembrance" of your good deeds; for, if you have any to boast of, they have quite escaped my notice! Let us plead together, and see whether I am right in my charge, or you in your vindication of yourself; declare the grounds of your dependence, that, if they will bear you out in your confidence, "you may be justified" before me.'

Alas! alas! that the offers of a free salvation should ever be despised through a vain confidence in our own goodness! O that we might not so despise our own mercies! Whatever sentence God shall pass upon us, "You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just! [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.4)." Let us not then provoke God to such a contest; for our hope will be only as a spider's web, that shall be swept away with the broom of destruction! [Isaiah 28:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.17).

But I understand it rather as a direction and encouragement to the repenting sinner. While some put away from them the Word of life, because they feel not their need of mercy; others do the same, from an apprehension of their unworthiness to obtain mercy. But God is ever solicitous to encourage the humble, and says, "Put me in remembrance of this promise; come and plead it with me! Declare your trust in it; and, unworthy as you are, you shall be justified."

As our Lord gave to Thomas the evidence of his senses, in order that his doubts might be effectually removed, so he here condescends to the infirmities of his people, in order to bring them to a full conviction of his love and faithfulness. Let this direction then be followed by every doubting, trembling soul. Let us take the Canaanite woman for our pattern, [Matthew 15:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.26-27); and our confidence shall before long be crowned with a rich reward! [Hebrews 10:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.35).

**Reflections.**

***~~1. How averse God is to the perishing of an immortal soul!~~***

What stronger comment can we have on that oath of Jehovah, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner. Turn! Turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel! [Ezekiel 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.11)." Contemplate the text in that view, and say whether God does not desire that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, [1 Timothy 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 2.4)." Truly "He delights in mercy;" and "judgment," on whoever it is exercised, "is his strange work," to which he is utterly averse.

***~~2. How bitter will be the reflections of all who perish in their sins!~~***

If there is one ingredient in the cup of a damned soul more bitter than another, it is this.

"God would have saved me, but I would not accept his free salvation! [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.37). I would not come to him that I might have life! [John 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.40)."

I beg you, beloved, treasure not up for yourselves such bitterness as this; but improve the present opportunity of obtaining mercy, for the day of grace once lost, is lost forever. This, brethren, is the accepted time! May he Lord grant that it may prove unto every one of you the day of salvation! [2 Corinthians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.2)."

***~~#935~~***

***~~THE OUT-POURING OF THE SPIRIT PROMISED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 44:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.1-5)~~***

KJV. "Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen; Thus says the Lord that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Do not fear, O Jacob my servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

NIV. "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel!"

There is a striking analogy between the things which take place in the *natural*and in the *spiritual*world.

In the natural world, in addition to the genial warmth of the *sun*, the *showers*are necessary to promote the progress of vegetation.

In the same way, in addition to the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon us, the influences of the Holy Spirit are necessary, to soften our hearts, to water the seed that has been sown in them, and to produce in us those "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

In this the office of the Holy Spirit consists. By his gracious operations on the soul, the Spirit applies to men that redemption which Jesus Christ has obtained for them; and by his sanctifying power, he makes them fit for that inheritance which their Redeemer purchased for them by his blood. Whenever therefore we behold in the Scriptures a promise of the Holy Spirit, we should treasure it up in our minds, and seek not only to understand its import, but also to experience the accomplishment of it in our souls.

In discoursing on the words which we have just read, we shall consider,

***~~I. The glorious promise here given to us.~~***

***~~The manner in which the promise is introduced, is particularly deserving of our attention.~~***

In the last verse of the preceding chapter, the state of Israel is represented as altogether desperate; they were "given up by God to the curse and to reproaches." Nevertheless God would not have any of them to despair; for, if they had but a desire to obtain mercy, he had mercy in reserve for them. He still regarded them as his "servants," whom he had "chosen and formed" for his special people, whom he had helped hitherto, and was still ready to "help" on every occasion that should arise; he calls them by the endearing names of "Jacob, and Israel, and Jeshurun;" and bids them to dismiss their fears, and to expect from him all that their hearts could desire.

And is it not in the same way that he addresses us? Yes! Notwithstanding all the judgments he has denounced against us for our sins, he says, "Yet hear this, O Jacob my servant;" 'remember your relation to me; consider how free and rich has been my grace towards you, in that I have "*formed*you from the womb," and "*chosen*you" from all eternity, to be my most favored servant; put away your fears; entertain worthy thoughts of your best Friend; limit not my tender mercies; enlarge your expectations to the utmost extent of your necessities; and you shall never be disappointed of your hope.'

It is of great importance to notice the *tender and affectionate manner in which God addresses his people*; because it is from thence that we collect the most just conceptions of his condescension and grace, and derive the richest encouragement to wait upon him.

It is also of great importance to observe what use God makes of the *doctrine of election*. Twice does he call them his "chosen;" because in that term is contained everything that is endearing and encouraging. Only let us reflect on the state we were in when he chose us, and we shall see that there is nothing too great for us to expect at the hands of such a gracious God, [Ezekiel 16:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.3-6).

***~~But the promise itself is most glorious.~~***

The gift of the Holy Spirit is that peculiar blessing which the Church in all ages was taught to look for under the Christian dispensation. A measure indeed of the Spirit was given to the godly at all times; but the fuller effusion was reserved for the times of the Apostles; as it is said, "The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified, [John 7:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.39)." If we go back as far as to the days of *Abraham*, we shall find that the promise of the Spirit was made to him, not so much for his descendants after the flesh, as for his spiritual progeny among the Gentiles, to whom it was fulfilled in the Apostles' days, [Galatians 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.14).

And the *prophets*taught the Jews, in every successive period, to look forward to the same time for the full enjoyment of this privilege. The prophet Joel in particular spoke strongly on this subject; and Peter refers to his words, as accomplished on the day of Pentecost. Compare [Joel 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.28-29) with [Acts 2:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.1-4); [Acts 2:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.16-18).

Our blessed Lord also, both before and after his resurrection, instructed his disciples to expect a more abundant measure of the Spirit than had ever yet been given to the world; and to that very instruction of his did Peter refer, when the Spirit was first poured out upon the Gentiles. Compare [Matthew 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.11) and [Luke 24:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.49) and [Acts 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 1.4-5) with [Acts 11:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.15-16).

The measure in which this blessing was to be imparted to the Church, is also particularly marked in the words of our text, "I will pour (not merely sprinkle, but pour) water upon him who is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" even such abundance, as shall be sure to reach the roots, and produce, not a transient change, like that of grass upon the house-top, but *a radical and permanent change, both of heart and life!*

That we may estimate the change aright, we have it exhibited in two striking images:  
that of grass, growing up after a season of extreme drought;  
that of willows, watered by perennial streams.

Here are images familiar to every eye, and calculated to convey a just idea of the effects universally produced by the operations of the Spirit of God upon the soul. A new principle of life begins to manifest itself; and a new beauty and excellency to adorn the whole character; the appropriate fruits of every season, and of every condition, are brought forth, and the whole soul appears "as a well-watered garden." Partial changes may be produced by natural means; but the supernatural operation of the Spirit invariably causes a total surrender of the soul to God. The unconverted man in his best estate conceives himself to have some right over himself; but the true convert says, yes, and delights to say,

"I am the Lord's!  
I am his rightfully!  
I am his willingly and deliberately!  
I am his unreservedly and forever!"

It is for this very end that the Spirit is promised; and these are its effects, wherever that promise is fulfilled.

Now then let all the house of Israel hear,

***~~II. The duties and privileges resulting from this glorious promise.~~***

Every promise brings with it correspondent duties as well as privileges; and most assuredly this promise is replete with instruction and consolation:

**1. To the Church at large.**

Think of *Israel*when under "the curse" of God, and overwhelmed by the "reproaches" of their enemies. What comfort must the words of our text have administered to them, especially to all who believed the prophet's testimony respecting them!

And shall it afford less comfort to *us*at this time? Certainly this is a season of lamentable drought, when compared with the apostolic age. Though God does not leave us altogether without a witness—yet the effect of our ministrations is very small and partial. But we look forward to a period; yes, and we hope that the clouds are even now gathering, when the Spirit shall be poured out again, and "showers of blessings" descend upon our thirsty land! [Ezekiel 34:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.26).

We look for the time, when the Church, which is now but as a slender plant, shall become a tree, in whose branches the "birds of every wing shall lodge, [Ezekiel 17:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 17.23). [Mark 4:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 4.31-32)." Then shall converts be "as the morning dew"—they shall fly in immense multitudes "as a cloud," and with the speed and velocity of "doves to their windows, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3). [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)."

The Church itself will be perfectly astonished at the vast increase of her members, [Isaiah 49:18-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.18-21); for "a nation shall be born in a day;" the most dreary regions of the earth shall, equally with ourselves, participate in the blessing; and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

O what joy should such glorious prospects afford us! Did Abraham rejoice when he obtained but a glimmering view of the day of Christ; and shall not we, who have already seen him risen on our horizon, and behold him now rapidly advancing to his meridian height? Was the birth of Jesus announced by angels as "glad tidings of great joy to all people;" and shall not his universal reign, now speedily approaching, be hailed with joy? Yes! Blessed be God! We not only "see the cloud of the bigness of a man's hand," but we behold the commencement of those showers, which shall refresh and fertilize the whole earth.

**2. To the weak and disconsolate in particular.**

What mercy can be in reserve for me, may one say, who am "given over to the curse of God, and to the reproaches" of my own conscience? Were I like "the earth that drinks in the rain, and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is dressed, I might hope for a blessing from God; but bearing, as I do, only briers and thorns, I am rejected, and near unto cursing; and my end is to be burned, [Hebrews 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7-8)."

But what room is there for such desponding apprehensions, when we contemplate the state of Israel as described in the preceding chapter, [Isaiah 43:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.28), and in the very words of our text? *The "thirsty and the dry ground" is that to which the promise is made*; and who may not find his character designated by those terms? But if these are not sufficiently humiliating to warrant our hope of a saving interest in the promise, let us reflect on the description of people for whom our blessed Savior, on his ascension to Heaven, received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was "for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them, [Psalm 68:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 68.18)." Surely the most self-condemning person in the universe may venture to place himself in that class, and consequently to expect under that character what he could not venture to hope for as promised to the righteous. And, if a very extraordinary measure of grace be thought necessary for us, more than for others—then we may surely find a sufficiency in the "floods" which are contained in the promise before us. Do not fear then, whoever you are; for God has said, that the poorest, even in the most destitute and desponding state—shall, on looking to the Savior, have *floods*and *fountains*of grace:  
unbounded in their measure,  
irresistible in their efficacy, and  
endless in their duration! [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18).

***~~3. To parents more especially.~~***

The covenant made with Abraham, was made with him and with his seed, [Genesis 17:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 17.7-9) with [Isaiah 59:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.21); and this very promise, which holds forth to us the chief blessing of that covenant, is expressly said to be "unto us, and to our children, and to as many as are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call! [Acts 2:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.38-39)." Do not let any then be satisfied with having it fulfilled to themselves alone; let all consider the interest which their children also have in it; let them plead it with God in behalf of their offspring; and let them remember that whatever measure of grace they themselves possess, it is given them, not for their own good only, but "for the good of their children after them, [Jeremiah 32:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.39)."

O Parents, bear in mind, that the gift of the Spirit is more to be desired in behalf of your children than thousands of silver and gold; let it be your daily prayer, that they may be endued with this precious gift; and, while you look for their growth in bodily nature and intellectual attainments, look to see them "growing up as willows by the water-courses," and manifesting to all around them, how richly they are watered by the grace of God.

That there is a great neglect of these things among religious professors, is but too true; but if the grace of God really exist in us, it will show itself by an unwearied solicitude for the welfare of our offspring; as the prophet clearly intimates, when he says of the converts in the latter day, "They shall bring their sons in their arms, and their daughters upon their shoulders, [Isaiah 49:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.22)." O that every mother might be as Hannah, and every father as Abraham, [1 Samuel 1:22-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 1.22-28). [Genesis 18:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.19), and that none of you would "give rest unto your God, [Isaiah 62:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.7)," until you have prevailed, like wrestling Jacob, [Hosea 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 12.4), and constrained him, as it were, to "shed forth his Holy Spirit abundantly upon your offspring through Jesus Christ our Savior, [Titus 3:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.5-6)."

**4. To young people, above all.**

Of whom is it said, that they shall, with such zeal and unanimity, devote themselves to God, and glory in the appellation of his people? Is it not of the young, who are springing up as willows by the water-courses? See then what is the first duty, and the highest privilege of the young—and see what all young people will do, as soon as they have "received the grace of God in truth!"

Are there none among you who feel your obligations to God for the gift of his only dear Son to die for you? Are there none so penetrated with his redeeming love, as to say in the fullness of your hearts, "What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits that he has done unto me?"

Come then to the table of the Lord, and surrender up yourselves to him there! Think it not too early to wait upon him in that ordinance; if you truly desire to be the Lord's, that is the ordinance at which in a more especial manner the surrender of yourselves to him should be made; and in that ordinance you may confidently expect that the Lord will more especially accept and bless you. In that ordinance too you form a closer union with the people of the Lord, who will delight to see you added to their society, and to help you forward by their counsels and their prayers. Come then, and "subscribe with your hand unto the Lord." Or rather, as soldiers, and slaves, and idolaters were used to inscribe on their flesh, in some indelible characters, the name of the general, or the master, or the idol, whom they served—so you should get inscribed on your heart, and on your arm, the name of your adorable Savior, and give yourselves up to him in "a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten! [Jeremiah 50:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 50.4-5), [2 Corinthians 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.5)."

***~~#936~~***

***~~THE FOLLY OF SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 44:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.20)~~***

KJV. "He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say: Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

We who have lived under the light of Scripture revelation, and have been instructed in the knowledge of the one true God, are amazed at the stupidity of the Heathen, who form idols of wood and stone, and worship gods which they themselves have made. But we do not consider, that it is not the forming of these images, but the trusting in them, that makes them gods; and that *we ourselves are guilty of idolatry as much as the heathen themselves*, if in any respect we "love and serve the creature more than the Creator! [Romans 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.25)." This is the essence of idolatry; as the Apostle tells us, "Beware of covetousness, which is idolatry! [Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.5)."

And of people addicted to sensual enjoyments, Paul says, they "make a god of their belly [Philippians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.19)." And Christians universally, being in danger of indulging an undue confidence in, or attachment to, the creature, are guarded against those evils in these very expressive terms, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols! [John 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.21)." In speaking therefore of idolaters, it is not necessary that we carry you back to the prophet's days, or that we take you among Pagans of the present day; the language in our text is quite as applicable to us at this time as to any of them. With a view therefore to spiritual idolaters among ourselves, I will show you:

***~~I. The folly of their ways.~~***

Of every one among them it may truly be said, "He feeds on ashes!" for, whatever the things be with which he seeks to satisfy his desires, they are:

***~~1. Idols are but ashes, and are therefore unsuitable.~~***

It is needless to say, how unsuitable ashes are for the food of the body; but they are not a whit less so than the things of this world are for the nourishment of the soul! The soul is a spiritual substance, and must be fed with that which is spiritual. It was formed for God; and nothing but what comes from God, and leads to God, can support it.

The Word of God, for instance, is food on which it may exist; and hence "the new-born babe desires the unadulterated milk of the word, that he may grow thereby! [1 Peter 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.2)." On this the saints of old existed, "Your words were found, and I ate them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart! [Jeremiah 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 15.16). [Psalm 119:103](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.103)."

The presence of God also is that which strengthens the believing soul, "for that it hungers and thirsts, even to see his power and glory, as they are revealed in the sanctuary; and, when a sense of his loving-kindness is imparted to it, the soul is filled as with marrow and fatness, and praises him with joyful lips, [Psalm 63:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.1-5)."

In a more particular manner the Christian is nourished by the Lord Jesus; on whom he feeds continually, and which he finds to "be food indeed, and drink indeed [John 6:53-55](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.53-55)."

*As for the things of time and sense, they are but as husks which the swine eat of*; and to attempt to feed on them, is only to "feed upon the wind, [Hosea 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 12.1)," and to "fill the belly with the east wind, [Job 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 15.2).

**2. Idols are but ashes, and are therefore unsatisfying.**

To all who go to the creature for happiness, the prophet says, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness, [Isaiah 55:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1-2)." In confirmation of the reproof here given, I will venture to appeal to all, even to those who have drunk deepest of the cup of pleasure, and feasted themselves most largely with carnal delights:

Has anything that you have ever enjoyed, afforded you permanent satisfaction?

"Was your eye ever truly satisfied with seeing, or your ear with hearing?"

"Was any man who loved silver, ever satisfied with silver? [Ecclesiastes 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 5.10)."

There is but one testimony on this head, from every man. *Vanity is written upon all human enjoyments; and vexation invariably follows in the pursuit of them!*

***~~3. Idols are but ashes, and are therefore injurious.~~***

As ashes, if taken into the stomach, would soon injure the constitution of the body—so all endeavors to satisfy the soul with carnal enjoyments will of necessity deprave and vitiate all its faculties. Such food will indispose the soul for everything that is spiritual and divine; it will weaken all its energies; and debase all its powers; and reduce it to the lowest possible state of degradation, causing it to nauseate everything which God has ordained for its good, and to desire everything which will tend to its destruction. Every day that a man lives to himself and to this present world, he departs farther and farther from God, and renders himself more and more incapable of heavenly pursuits and heavenly enjoyments. He is "a sinner against his own soul! [Numbers 16:38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 16.38);" and is fitly represented as "wronging his own soul, and loving death [Proverbs 8:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 8.35-36)."

**II. The source of their errors.**

It is not from any radical defect in their understanding that this idolatry proceeds; it comes from their heart, "a deceived heart has turned them aside." This is a point which is by no means duly considered. If the subject of idolatry be brought fairly before a heathen, he sees at once that *his god*cannot help itself, and consequently can much less afford any help to him.

In like manner the spiritual idolater, if only he will candidly examine the matter, must see, and be convinced, that *a vain world can never satisfy an immortal soul*. But,

***~~1. His heart is deceived by Satan.~~***

Satan is the great deceiver of mankind, He puts a gloss on everything; representing as desirable, that which is in itself evil; and hiding the deformity of it; and assuring us, that no painful consequences will follow a compliance with his suggestions. Thus he beguiled Eve in Paradise; and thus he still deceives men over the face of the whole earth. "He was a lying spirit in all the prophets of Ahab, [1 Kings 22:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 22.22);" and he has his agents in every place, who are ready by every possible means to forward his delusions. He can, and often does, "assume the form of an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15;" and frequently urges his temptations in so subtle a way, as "to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, [Matthew 24:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 24.24)."

In a word, so subtle are his devices, that to know them, and be aware of them—is a science which scarcely any human being is able to attain, [2 Corinthians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.11)—so innumerable are his wiles, and so unsearchable are his deceits!

***~~2. His deceived heart turns aside his whole man.~~***

The heart, beguiled thus, and vitiated with evil propensities, blinds his understanding, biases his will, and carries him forward in ways, which a more dispassionate view of things would lead him to condemn. This distinction clearly appears in the two verses preceding our text, "They have not known nor understood; for God has shut their eyes, that they cannot see, and their hearts, that they cannot understand. No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, "Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" Then it is added, "He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside."

The blindness in his understanding arises from a lack of due and unbiased consideration in the heart. And, in fact, all evil will be found to originate here. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil! [Ecclesiastes 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.3);" and it is "deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked! [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.9)." Like a bent arrow, his deceitful heart draws him gradually aside, and causes him to rest in a situation far distant from that at which he aimed. Who among us has not had abundant experience of this in his own soul? Who among us has not been drawn from complying with the dictates of a better principle, by the more powerful influence of an evil principle within him; and thus followed the less proper course, at the very time that he beheld and approved the better course, [Romans 7:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.23).

Thus it is with all the votaries of this world; they have an internal consciousness that their ways and their doings are not good; they therefore will not bring them to the test of God's revealed will, "they are afraid of coming to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved, [John 3:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.19-20)." Yet, through the deceits of Satan and their own hearts, they say, "We shall have peace, notwithstanding we walk in the imagination of our own hearts! [Deuteronomy 29:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 29.19)." Thus, I say, it is with them; they are "carried away by a spirit of whoredom, [Hosea 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 4.12);" "they are drawn away by their own lust, and enticed. Then, when their lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death! [James 1:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.14-15)."

Hence we may easily account for,

***~~III. The strength of their delusions.~~***

***~~"They cannot deliver their souls".~~***

Truly, they "are tied and bound with the chain of their sins." The whole generation of ungodly men are "led captive by the devil, at his will! [2 Timothy 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.26)," and are "carried away to their idols, even as they are led! [1 Corinthians 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.2)."

Among them all there are few, if any, who have not felt at times some desire to liberate themselves from their thraldom, and formed some purpose to turn unto their God. But they have not been able to effect it; *their inward lusts have been too strong for them, and their deep-rooted habits too inveterate*; so that "they could no more change their course of life, than an Ethiopian could change his skin, or a leopard his spots! [Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.23)."

Their good desires have perhaps been renewed from time to time; but have soon vanished again, "their goodness being only as a morning cloud, or as the early dew that passes away, [Hosea 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.4)."

In a time of sickness possibly, and at the expected approach of death, they may appear to have gained the victory over their corruptions. But no resolutions of theirs have been found sufficient. Returning health has brought with it renewed temptations; and these have borne down all their purposes, which have snapped asunder, as the cords or ropes with which Sampson was bound; and the poor devotees of this world have returned again to their idols, "as a dog to his vomit, and as a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire!"

***~~"They cannot even say: Is there not a lie in my right hand?"~~***

Even to consider their ways with any seriousness, is an effort beyond their power. I mean not that they are under any natural incapacity for this; but such is their moral weakness, and such the strength of their corrupt nature—that they cannot do what their better judgment would dictate. If they attempt to read or pray, their minds start aside from the employment, "even as a crooked bow that will not respond to the archer's aim, [Psalm 78:57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.57). [Hosea 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.16);" and their thoughts quickly rove to the very ends of the earth.

It is said of Satan, that, "as a strong man armed, he keeps his palace, and his goods are in peace, [Luke 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21)." And this is verified in experience; for he keeps his vassals from considering their bondage; he suggests to them that they will have some more convenient season for such unwelcome reflections; and he thus induces them to "think only of peace and safety, until sudden destruction comes upon them! [1 Thessalonians 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.3)," and they "perish without a remedy! [Proverbs 29:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 29.1)."

One would indeed scarcely conceive it possible that rational and immortal beings should be so insensible in the midst of their dangers, and against all the dictates of their better judgment; but so it is! They are willingly deceived, and are therefore "given over to a delusion to believe their own lie, [2 Thessalonians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.11);" and so "vain are they in their imaginations, and so darkened in their foolish hearts, [Romans 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.21)," that to bid them to examine whether they have not a lie in their right hand, is as great an offence to them, as it would be to a poor, blind, deceived heathen.

**INFERENCES.**

***~~1. How thankful we should be for the Savior!~~***

If God had not "laid help for us upon One that is mighty," who among us could ever be saved? Blessed be God, if there is "a strong man armed that has enslaved us, there is a stronger than he, that has overcome him, and taken from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divided his spoils, [Luke 11:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21-22);" and at this moment sends his servants to proclaim, in his name, "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, [Isaiah 49:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.9)." The very first sermon which he himself ever preached on earth was to this effect, [Luke 4:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.18-19).

In his name therefore I now "preach the acceptable year of the Lord," even the year of Jubilee, wherein every slave may assert his liberty, and claim the possession of his forfeited inheritance.

Rejoice then, brethren, in these glad tidings; and now "cast your idols to the moles and to the bats." Feed no more on ashes; let not a deceived heart any longer turn you aside; but deliver your souls; and come forth into the light and liberty of the children of God.

If your past *idolatries*have involved your souls in heinous guilt, there is a sufficiency in the blood of Christ to cleanse you from it! [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7).

If your *corruptions*appear so inveterate that you cannot hope to subdue them, "the grace of Christ shall be sufficient for you! [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)."

Only seek henceforth your all in him, and "you shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end! [Isaiah 45:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.17)."

***~~2. How watchful we should be against the remains of our corrupt nature!~~***

While we are in this world, we still carry about with us "a body of sin and death," and many corrupt propensities, against which we must be ever on our guard. We are but "in part renewed." "The flesh still lusts against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit against the flesh, [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.17)."

And Satan has still power to tempt us, yes, and "will sift us all as wheat," if our blessed Lord does not interpose for our help. *We see in Demas, how prone the carnal heart is to relapse into the love of earthly things*. And we know very little of ourselves, if we have not learned by our own manifold backslidings, that we are yet in danger of "turning back unto perdition! [Hebrews 10:38-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.38-39)," and of "losing all the things which we have wrought, [2 John 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 John 1.8)." I would say then, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation, [Matthew 26:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.41);" "and take to you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand! [Ephesians 6:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.12-13)."

***~~#937~~***

***~~THE WORK OF REDEMPTION A MOTIVE TO CONVERSION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 44:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.22)~~***

"Return unto me; for I have redeemed you!"

On occasions of public worship we generally expect a set discourse from man. But on the present occasion, I wish you to place man altogether out of the question, and to listen to a few words addressed to you by Jesus Christ himself. It is he who is speaking in the passage before us, and who, addressing, as it were, every one of us by name, urges us by the most forcible of all considerations to return to him.

True indeed the words in the first instance were delivered to the Jews, who, notwithstanding all that Jehovah, the only true God, had done for them, were prone to idolatry; and who were absurd enough to cut down a tree, and fashion it after the image of a man, and, after having roasted their food with a part of it, to worship the remnant of it as a god. Yet, instead of denouncing his heaviest judgments against them, our Lord says, "O Jacob and Israel, you are my servant; O Israel, you shall not be forgotten by me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions; and as a cloud, your sins. Return unto me; for I have redeemed you."

Now though we are not gross idolaters as the Israelites were, we may very fitly consider the words of our text as addressed to ourselves, since every one of us has lived in spiritual idolatry, "loving and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore."

Let us then consider:

***~~I. The invitation, "Return unto me."~~***

That we have all departed from God is evident from what the Prophet Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray, every one to his own way, [Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.6)." Thus though, as to the particular ways which we have pursued, we may differ: one having rushed into all manner of gross sins, while another has walked in a more moral and decent way—we are all alike in this, that we have lived to ourselves rather than unto God. And therefore we may all, without exception, consider the invitation as addressed to ourselves, "Return unto me!"

***~~1. Return unto Me in penitence.~~***

As sinners, we are all called upon to repent; nor can we ever be accepted by God, while we continue impenitent. The Prodigal Son, in his return, is a pattern to us all, [Luke 15:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.18-19); The Publican, and not the self-applauding Pharisee, was justified before God, [Luke 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.14). It is not the more notorious sinner only, that is to "sow in tears, in order to reap in joy;" for "he who covers his sins, whoever he may be, shall not prosper; it is he only who confesses and forsakes them, who shall find mercy, [Proverbs 28:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 28.13)." Hence the Savior would have the very best of men approach him with that penitential acknowledgment, "Behold, I am vile; I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes! [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 42.6)."

***~~2. Return unto Me in faith.~~***

We are not to come to the Lord doubting either his power or his willingness to save us, [Mark 9:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.22-23). [Matthew 8:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.2)—but fully confiding in him as able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25). "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole, [Matthew 9:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.21)." Our Savior would not have any doubts entertained in our mind. He reproved Martha for questioning the fullest possible accomplishment of his Word, "Said I not unto you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God! [John 11:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.40)." In our return to him he will make our faith the measure of the benefits he will confer upon us, "He says, according to your faith it shall be unto you, [Matthew 9:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.29)."

***~~3. Return unto Me in love.~~***

He must have willing servants, or none. We must account "none of his commandments to be grievous, [1 John 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.3)," but regard "his yoke easy and his burden light, [Matthew 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.30)." In returning to him, the language of our hearts must be that which he himself used, when first he undertook our cause, "Lo, I come; I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart! [Psalm 40:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.7-8)." In fact, our readiness and determination of heart to obey his will is the only true test of our repentance, our faith, or our love. With whatever measure of penitence or faith we may profess to return to him, "it will be in vain to cry, Lord! Lord! if we do not obey the things which he commands, [Luke 6:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.46)."

While we listen to our Savior's invitation, it will be well to consider,

***~~II. The motive with which he enforces it.~~***

He might well have enforced it with the most terrible denunciations of his wrath in the event of our refusal. But he rather reminds us of the great things he has done for us:

***~~1. As a call upon our gratitude.~~***

Think what I have done for you, in leaving my Father's bosom, in assuming your fallen nature, in bearing your sins upon the cross, and in effecting your reconciliation with your offended God. Does all this love call for such a return at your hands; and "is it right for you to requite" it as you are now doing? Is it well for you to abide at a distance from me, and to "trample upon my blood as an unholy thing," and to "crucify me afresh by continuing in your sins? [Hebrews 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.6); [Hebrews 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.29)." Had I never shown such mercy to you, your wickedness in departing from me would have been comparatively light; but "now you can have no cloak for your sin, [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22);" nay, you must stand utterly condemned in your own minds. But if you will duly contemplate the love which I have shown to you, it will surely generate in your hearts somewhat of a corresponding love to me, and "constrain you to live unto him, who has so lived and died for you, [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14)."

***~~2. As an encouragement under our fears.~~***

In despite of all that the Lord Jesus has done and suffered for us, we are prone, under a deep conviction of our sins, to doubt whether he will receive such sinful creatures as we. But *let us suppose, that, immediately after his resurrection, he had met many of his murderers, and told them, that the very blood which they had shed should cleanse them from the guilt of shedding it*; could they have doubted his willingness to save their souls?

Now it is in this very way that he meets us at this time. Our sins were the true cause of all his sufferings; and in his Word he meets us at this very hour, and says to every one of us individually, "I have redeemed you; O return to me; for I have redeemed you." Dismiss then your fears, whatever you may have been, or whatever you may have done; for his blood will cleanse from all sin! [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7)," nor shall any soul perish that believes in him! [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16). Let the most vile man in the universe only return to him in penitence and faith, "and He will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon all his multiplied transgressions! [Isaiah 55:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.7-8)."

**APPLICATION.**

Let the careless sinner hear this. When you are in the midst of all your mirth and gaiety, call this to mind; 'My Savior is here with me; and in a still small voice he says to me, Return unto me from whom you have deeply revolted, "return unto me; for I have redeemed you." What has the *world*ever done for you, that it should be preferred to Me? Or what can it ever do, that shall compensate for the loss of My redeeming love?' Surely, my brethren, one such thought as this will damp all your joys, and constrain you, like the Savior's look on Peter, to go forth from your scenes of dissipation, and weep bitterly, [Matthew 26:75](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.75).

Let the backsliding professor, in particular, consider himself as here addressed. To him our Savior says, 'What iniquity have you found in me, that you should so slight my love? Have I been a wilderness to you, and a land of darkness, that you should thus wickedly depart from me? [Jeremiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5); [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.31).

O remember, "It would have been better for you never to have known me, than thus to reflect dishonor on my name! [2 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.21)." Think, in what your declension must issue, if you return not to me with your whole heart.' And now, before it is too late, say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" "I will return unto my first Husband; for then it was better with me than now! [Hosea 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.7); [Hosea 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.8)." Then shall you pour forth those joyous strains which follow my text; and, with David and Peter, unite forever in the loudest hosannas to your redeeming God!

***~~#938~~***

***~~REDEMPTION A GROUND OF JOY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 44:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.23)~~***

KJV. "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord has done it; shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

NIV. "Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel!"

If the Word of God produced its full effect upon the hearts of men, this world would be very much assimilated to Heaven; there would be the same views, the same dispositions, the same exercises and employments among our fallen race, as are found among the angels, in the presence of their God. Let us only conceive that the subjects in the text universally occupied the minds of men; and that they were celebrated by all ranks of people with the ardor and affection suited to their importance; surely we would have a very Heaven upon earth! Permit me then to remind you, that,

***~~I. "The Lord has redeemed his people".~~***

The redemption of the Jews from Babylon was a great and joyful event. The person who was to effect it was foretold by name. The manner in which he should take the city of Babylon (by turning the course of the Euphrates, and passing through the gates of brass), and the use which he should make of his triumph (by liberating the captive Jews, and ordering them to rebuild their city and temple), was all distinctly specified over two hundred years before such a person as Cyrus existed in the world, verse 26-28 and chapter 45:1-4. But as extraordinary as this event was, it was only a shadow of one infinitely more important: the redemption of sinners by our Lord Jesus Christ!

***~~1. He has redeemed his people by price.~~***

In a figurative sense, God may be said to have "given Egypt and Ethiopia as the ransom of Israel, [Isaiah 43:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.3)." But what is the "ransom that he has found for us? [Job 33:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 33.24)." What is "the price with which he has bought us [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)" out of the hands of sin and Satan? Kingdoms and worlds were insufficient for the purpose. We could not be "redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but only with the precious blood of God's co-equal Son! [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19)." As great as the price was, God did not hesitate to lay it down, "he purchased the Church with his own blood! [Acts 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.28)." No longer can we now be detained in bondage, if we claim our liberty in the name of Christ.

The law cannot condemn us, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13).  
Satan cannot lead us captive, [Luke 11:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.22).  
Sin cannot have dominion over us, [Romans 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.14).

If we avail ourselves of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," we shall be "delivered from every kind of bondage, and be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God! [Romans 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.21)." "Being made free by Christ, we shall be free indeed! [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)."

***~~2. He has redeemed his people by power.~~***

The deliverances given to the Jews of old were effected by "a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm." And it is only "in the day of God's power that any are made willing, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3)" to embrace the salvation offered them in Christ Jesus. The "report of the Gospel is believed by those only, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed! [Isaiah 53:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.1)." To rescue a soul from the tyranny of sin and Satan, is a work of omnipotence. Easy as it may seem to persuade a person to believe in Christ, it far surpasses the ability of any created being. "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5);" and we are told, that, in the accomplishment of this work, he exerts no less power than he did when he raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, above all the principalities and powers, whether of Heaven or Hell! [Ephesians 1:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.19-21). The original in verse 19. shows that the Apostle labored to the utmost to express his ideas, which were too big for utterance. Having thus multiplied his terms to the uttermost, and pressed into his service the strongest word that the Greek language could afford him, he repeats it. What light does this cast upon the subject before us!

Redemption is prepared for us before we come into the world; but, in order to enjoy its benefits, we must, each in his own person, experience the mighty working of God's power; He who "spoiled principalities and powers upon the cross," must triumph over them in our hearts; and incline us, by the effectual operation of his Spirit, to embrace the salvation which he purchased with his blood.

God has not only thus consulted our happiness, but:

***~~II. In the work of redemption, he has also glorified himself".~~***

Every work of God's hands bespeaks his wisdom, his power, and his goodness; but the work of redemption glorifies all his perfections. We might easily show how his justice and his holiness are illustrated by it, and how they are made to harmonize with truth and mercy; but we shall content ourselves with showing that:

***~~1. In the work of redemption he has manifested his grace and mercy.~~***

Consider only the state in which we were, when God sent his only dear Son to redeem us; and the state in which we are found, when he sends his Holy Spirit to apply that redemption to us: we were fallen after the example of the apostate angels; yet God passed by them, and delivered up his own Son for us. We are still "enemies to God in our minds by wicked works," and are actually fighting against God with all our might; and yet does he subdue us by "the rod of his strength," and make "his Gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of our souls." Must we not stand amazed at this difference which is put between us and the fallen angels? Must we not adore that sovereignty which "chose us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4)," and in due season exalts us to thrones of glory; yes, which in many instances favors the vilest of publicans and harlots in preference to learned Scribes and self-applauding Pharisees! [Matthew 21:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.31). We are told indeed, that God designed by his Gospel to display "the exceeding riches of his grace, [Ephesians 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.6-7); [Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.7);" and this end is thoroughly accomplished; for wherever the Gospel is received, it invariably magnifies his grace in the eyes of men. 'Why did you choose me, Lord? Why was *I*made to comply with your invitations, while so many were allowed to decline them, and to perish in their sins?' Scarcely the gift of Christ himself will furnish matter for more admiration and gratitude in Heaven than this; or rather, I should say, *the greatness of the gift of salvation, and the sovereignty with which it is bestowed, will be interwoven with each other in everlasting hallelujahs.*

**2.** **In the work of redemption he has manifested his truth and faithfulness.**

The redemption given us in Christ was a subject of prophecy, as well as that which was given to the Jews through the instrumentality of Cyrus. And when Christ was sent into the world, the truth and faithfulness of God were most conspicuously displayed. Of these, the aged and inspired priest more particularly expressed his admiration; repeatedly blessing and praising God for "performing the promises made by the mouth of his holy Prophets, and remembering the oath which he had sworn to our father Abraham, [Luke 1:68](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.68); [Luke 1:70](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.70); [Luke 1:72-73](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.72-73)."

Nor is the truth of God to be noticed only in sending us a Redeemer; it is equally visible in *applying redemption to our souls*. There is not one that ever partakes of this redemption, but in consequence of his having been "given to Christ" before the foundation of the world! [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6). [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9). Nor is one brought finally to the complete enjoyment of it in Heaven, but his continued preservation through all his perils and conflicts is an accomplishment of that promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you! [Hebrews 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5)."

Surely at the end of our journey we shall take the same review its Joshua did in his last moments; we shall adore the faithfulness of God and say, "Of all the good things which God has promised me, not one thing has failed! [Joshua 23:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 23.14)."

Is the glory of God so blended with the happiness of man? Then surely,

***~~III. This is a ground of most exalted joy to the whole creation.~~***

***~~All, both in Heaven and earth, are required to rejoice in redemption.~~***

Even the angels who never fell have reason to rejoice in this great event, because by means of it *they have brighter discoveries of God's character, and more enlarged views of his perfections*. Indeed they no sooner beheld its accomplishment in the incarnation of Christ, than they sang, "Glory to God in the highest!" And from the moment that Christ had completed his work, and was seated at the right hand of God, they commenced a new song, ascribing glory to the Lamb, as well as unto Him who sits upon the throne! [Revelation 5:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.12-13).

But it is to men more especially that the Gospel is "tidings of great joy! [Luke 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.10)." They are the people more immediately interested in it; nor is there "a tree in the whole forest" of the universe, "from the cedar to the hyssop," that ought not to "break forth into singing, and shout for joy."

Let those who are most elevated in rank and dignity consider, what source of joy the whole world affords them in comparison with this.

Do they admire wisdom? "In this are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge! [Colossians 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.3)."

Do they find gratifications in wealth and honor? What can ever enrich or ennoble them like the Gospel of Christ, by which they become children of God, and heirs of his kingdom!

Let the *poor* also, who merely vegetate, as it were, in obscurity, let them remember, that they are "plants of the Lord's planting, [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3)," and that they are as much savingly interested in redeeming love as any people upon earth. Methinks, the less poor Christians have of carnal joy, the more they should seek to rejoice in God. Indeed they are as much distinguished above the rich in respect of spiritual privileges, as the rich are above them in the vanities of this world! [James 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.5). What God therefore has chosen for them, let them choose also for themselves.

***~~Moreover their joy should be proportioned to the occasion for redemption.~~***

A cold or languid expression of gratitude is utterly unsuited to the marvelous mercy and grace given to us in salvation! This calls for all the powers of our souls. Yes, all that is within us should praise His holy name!

If we would form a just idea of the state in which we should now be, **let us imagine ourselves already suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!**

How then, would we then hear the offer of salvation?

How would the fallen angels rejoice to see the gates of Hell opened to them, and to have an offer of immediate restoration to the felicity of Heaven! How would every one break forth into singing! **What shouts of joy would echo through the vast expanse of Hell!**

Precisely thus, ought we believers now to be affected with our wondrous salvation from sin and Hell!

We are told that when Titus Flaminius, the Roman general and proconsul, caused liberty to be proclaimed in the theater to the States of Greece, the people with one consent rent the air with their acclamations, extolling him as their greatest benefactor, and crying: A Savior! a Savior!

How much reason have we to exalt our adorable Redeemer, who has redeemed us with His precious sin-atoning blood! Let us then sing, and shout for joy!

Let the wondrous mercy and love and grace which He has manifested in our redemption, be the special subjects of our praise! Thus shall we be prepared to join the heavenly choir, and to sing hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb forever and ever!

***~~#939~~***

***~~THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 45:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.8)~~***

KJV. "Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it."

NIV. "You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the LORD, have created it!"

It is generally thought, that doctrines relating to God's sovereignty, and to the divine decrees, are chiefly, if not exclusively, dwelt upon by the Apostle Paul. But, if anyone reads the Old Testament, he will find these doctrines advanced in almost every page. The chapter before us will furnish us with an instance quite in point.

God had determined to deliver his people from their Babylonian captivity above two hundred years before they were carried captive; or Babylon itself, as an empire, had any prominent existence in the world. God also named the person by whom it should be effected, almost three hundred years before he was born, and yet there had never been a king of that name; and even specified the means by which he should effect the conquest of Babylon, which was so fortified as to be, humanly speaking, impregnable, verse 1-4. God declared, also, that that person, contrary to all reasonable expectation, should liberate them without fee or reward, and give orders for the rebuilding of their city and temple, verse 13. *Who does not see, in all this, Jehovah acting as a Sovereign, according to his own will and pleasure, and directing everything for his own glory?*

The Persians, over whom this Cyrus was to reign, had an idea that there were two separate and independent powers, represented under the emblems of light and darkness, who were the authors, the one of all good, and the other of all evil. To these they would be ready to ascribe their failure or success.

But God told them beforehand, "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things! [Isaiah 45:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.7)." Consequently, they must give all the glory of their success to him. Then he issues his command to the heavens and the earth to concur with him in this great event, and to produce among his people those blissful scenes which he had destined them to enjoy.

In this view, the words before us are, not a prayer, but*a prophetic annunciation of an event which would assuredly, in due season*, be accomplished. And, in our further explanation of them, I will mark,

***~~I. The import of this prophecy.~~***

***~~Its primary reference is to the restoration of the Jews to their own land.~~***

This is the subject treated of; and to this the words undoubtedly, in the first instance, refer. Certainly, by the decree of Cyrus, the Jewish people would be delivered from most cruel bondage; and, by their re-establishment in their own land, they would, together with an abundance of temporal blessings, again enjoy the blessedness of waiting upon God in the instituted ordinances of his worship. And inasmuch as this would tend to the advancement of their souls in righteousness and true holiness, it might justify the language by which it was expressed.

To the same effect the Prophet Ezekiel speaks, "I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them! [Ezekiel 34:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.26-27)."

**But it is evident that the prophecy includes in it a more important event; and that its ulterior reference is to the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.**

Under similar emblems is the Messiah's kingdom frequently described. It is chiefly characterized by the outpouring of the Spirit upon God's Church and people, and the consequent production of the fruits of righteousness among them in rich abundance. Remarkable is that declaration of the Prophet Joel, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days! [Joel 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.28-29)." Of the true meaning of those words we can have no doubt; because they were cited by Peter on the day of Pentecost, as fulfilled, when he and the rest of the Apostles were enabled by the Spirit to address their audience in the different languages of all the nations to which they belonged, [Acts 2:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.16-18).

With a sanctifying efficacy also was this effusion of the Spirit accompanied, as Isaiah also had foretold; for "when the Spirit was to be poured out from on high, then was the wilderness to become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field to be counted for a forest, [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15)."

This, I say, was to characterize the Christian, as David also had foretold, "He will be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more! [Psalm 72:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.6-7)."

But my more particular object in this discourse is, to point out, not merely the sense of the prophecy, but also:

***~~II. The peculiar beauty of the image under which it is conveyed.~~***

We are no strangers to the benefits arising from the showers which water the earth; and the correspondence between those and the benefits accruing from an outpouring of the Spirit of God is obvious and intelligible to all. You will remember, that our text is a command to the heavens and the earth to perform their respective offices for the renovation of the world. And I wish you particularly to notice:

***~~1. Their mutual dependence, as here intimated.~~***

Every one knows, that in a season of drought the earth cannot send forth its fruits; it must be watered by the clouds, in order that free scope may be given for the exercise of its vegetative and fructifying powers. In like manner, the clouds, however liberally they may pour forth their stores upon the earth, can produce no fruits, unless they fall upon a fertile soil. On a sandy desert their gifts are wasted, altogether without effect.

I do not say that the Spirit of God is equally dependent on the powers of man; for *man has no power which he has not first received from God*; but in the ordinary course of God's dealings with mankind, there must be a similar exercise of powers on the part of man, to render effectual the gifts of God. However good the seed of the Word may be, or however richly it may be watered by the Spirit of God, we see, by experience, that it does not spring up when sown by the way-side; and that it then only produces fruit unto perfection, when it is sown in a honest and good heart, [Luke 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.15). I need not say *how barren the heart of man is, it not watered by divine grace*. He knows little of himself, who does not feel that "without" constant communications from the Lord Jesus "Christ he can do nothing, [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5)."

Yet, at the same time, we must take care to improve the blessings conferred upon us. We must plough up the fallow ground, and harrow in the seed that is cast upon it; and endeavor to take out, from time to time, the weeds which spring up within us, and which, if disregarded, would soon obstruct the growth of the better principles within us.

In a word, we must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling, notwithstanding all fruitfulness proceeds from God; yes, and because it is God who gives us both to will and do of his good pleasure! [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13)."

***~~2. Their united operation, as here described.~~***

"Behold the heavens dropping down fatness upon the earth, and the skies pouring down righteousness!" Behold, at the same time, "the earth opening" to receive the benefits, and "righteousness and salvation springing up together."

Behold this, I say, in the field of nature; what a change is wrought, almost instantaneously on the face of the earth!

Behold it, also, in the field of grace. Behold a church thus visited with the outpouring of divine grace! How blessed the change that takes place in the ordinances of religion, in the habits of the people, and in the different institutions which immediately spring up for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world!

Behold a soul thus highly favored; formerly it had not a disposition or desire but towards the things of time and sense; God, and all the wonders of redeeming love were out of sight; and eternity had but a slender influence on its decisions. But now the thoughts go forth with devout affection towards heavenly objects; prayer and praise, which formerly were no more than a mere outward form, are the sweet, I had almost said the natural, exercises of the mind. To fulfill the will of God, and to promote his glory, to enjoy his presence and to taste his love; to grow up into his image, and be made fit for his inheritance—these are now the great ends for which the soul desires to live, and the constant object of its pursuit; and all its tempers, dispositions, and habits, are brought into accordance with these new desires.

Let anyone, looking back upon his former life, compare with it his state since he has received the grace of God; and he will find, that his soul has become comparatively, "like a well-watered garden;" and that the fruits of righteousness, of which it once was destitute, are springing up continually, to the praise and glory of his God!

The union of the two is inseparable; wherever fruitfulness is, there has previously been the grace of God; and wherever the grace of God descends into the soul, there will immediately spring up the fruits of righteousness, as indications and evidences of its power. "Truth will assuredly spring out of the earth, when righteousness looks down from Heaven, [Psalm 85:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.11)."

***~~3. The true source and origin of all their efficacy.~~***

In my text it is said, "I the Lord have created it." In the material world, all is of God, and of God alone. The whole universe combined could not make one shower, or give fertility to a sandy desert. In the same way, nor can any power but God's effect the renovation of fallen man. Hence it is said of the regenerate soul, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them, [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10); [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24)."

Whatever are the means used by God, the work is his alone. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that gives the increase! [1 Corinthians 3:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6-7)." To him must everything be traced, as much as the creation itself; even to his will, which ordains it; and to his power, which executes it; so that to him must all the glory be ascribed by every soul, both in this world and the world to come!

***~~See now, from hence,~~***

***~~1. What a blessing the Gospel is.~~***

No one needs be told what a blessing showers are to the thirsty earth. Precisely such is the Gospel to the souls of men, "As the rain and the snow come down from above and water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give bread to the eater and seed to the sower—so is the Word which proceeds from God," when accompanied by the Spirit from on high! [Isaiah 55:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.10-11).

I wish that this were duly understood. People form strange notions about the Gospel, as though it were of no use but to produce dissensions in families, and wild enthusiasm in the soul; but its real and true use, as we may see from what took place at the first publication of it on the day of Pentecost, is to "make glad the wilderness, and to transform a desert into the garden of the Lord! [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2).

Let the soul that has experienced its effects, say, whether any other principles can equal it in power, or any other fruits bear a comparison with those produced by it? Truly, "it brings forth fruit in all the world," and "is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe!"

***~~2. What is to be done, on our part, to render it effectual.~~***

The earth is said to "open its mouth," to receive the early and the latter rain; and it puts forth all its powers to make a suitable return.

Thus should we do; we should be looking up to God for the gift of his Holy Spirit; and open our very souls to receive his gracious communications; and then exert every faculty for a suitable improvement of the grace given. We are to "be workers together with God." We are not to be merely passive, in the receipt of his favors; but active, in employing them to the ends for which they are bestowed.

What might we not hope for, if all our hearers came here with such thirsting spirits, and went hence with such a determination to render unto God the fruits which he requires! Be in earnest, brethren; and we shall see more and more, that, "as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to bring forth, so will the Lord God cause righteousness and peace to spring forth among us" in richer abundance than we have ever yet been privileged to behold them! [Isaiah 61:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.11).

**3. To whom we are indebted, if ever it has become effectual for our good.**

I need not say to whom we are indebted, either for the fertilizing showers, or for the fruits produced by them. Nor need I say how cordially every well-instructed soul will acknowledge his obligations to the Lord, saying, "By the grace of God, I am what I am! 1 Corinthians 15:10." In ourselves we have no reason to glory over our unsaved neighbor; seeing that "it is God alone who has made us to differ from him! 1 Corinthians 4:7." But, while we give all possible glory to God, from whose free and sovereign grace our blessings have proceeded, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17)—we must so walk as to show us that "God is with us of a truth; and that all who behold us may acknowledge us to be "a field which the Lord has blessed!"

***~~#940~~***

***~~STRIVING WITH OUR MAKER~~***

**[Isaiah 45:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.9)**

"Woe unto him who strives with his Maker!"

*God is a mighty Sovereign, greatly and exclusively to be feared.*To show that those who were exalted as rivals to Him had no power, he challenged them all to foretell any future event; or, if they could not do that, to acknowledge his supremacy. As for himself, all things were naked and open before him, yes, and were done by him, "I form the light, and create darkness; I bring prosperity, and create disaster; I the Lord do all these things! verse 7." But, in despite of all the manifestations which he has given of his supremacy, men would still continue to rebel against him; and therefore he warns them of the terrible danger to which they exposed themselves, "Woe to him who strives with his Maker!"

To elucidate these words, I will point out,

**I. The conduct reprobated.**

It may be supposed impossible for men to strive with their Maker, but:

***~~1. Men strive with God by disobeying his revealed will in his Word.~~***

He has made known his will in his written Law—but men will not obey it!

Tell them that God has enjoined this, and forbidden that—and they will spurn at the restraint imposed upon them, and say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord; neither will I obey his voice! [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 5.2) and [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.4)."

And what is this, but downright rebellion? I am sure that we would account it so, if we were so treated by our child or our servant; and no doubt God will charge it to us as a deliberate resistance of his will.

***~~2. Men strive with God by murmuring at his dispensations.~~***

*God always acts according to his sovereign will, in both the dispensations both of his providence and grace.*The rich and the poor owe to him their respective lots; as do also all who are appointed to health or sickness, life or death, [Deuteronomy 32:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.39). There is not any trial with which man is visited, but it proceeds from God. But where do we find one who, in a state of trouble, has not been ready to murmur and repine? And what is that, but striving with our Maker? So God construes it; and so it will be found in the last day [1 Corinthians 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.10).

As to the sovereign exercise of his grace, that is still more offensive to our proud hearts! Though we claim for ourselves a right to dispose of our own property as we please—we refuse that right to him; as if, in benefitting others, he did to us an injury! [Romans 9:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.19-21). The very case is stated by Paul; who, having instanced, in the case of Pharaoh, and in the destinies of Jacob and of Esau, the uncontrolled sovereignty of God, states the feelings of an ungodly man: "You will say unto me, Why then does he find fault? for who has resisted his will?"

To which God indignantly replies, "Nay, but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him who formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Here, then, we see indisputably in what light God views all such instances of murmuring and complaint; for, in all circumstances whatever, our only wish should be, "Not my will, but may your will be done."

***~~3. Men strive with God by rejecting his Gospel.~~***

God, in his Gospel, comes and entreats of man to accept of reconciliation with him through the Son of his love; But how do men treat this divine message? They reject it utterly; and say in their hearts, respecting the Lord Jesus Christ, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" In the parable of the wedding-feast, "all who were invited began to make excuse." And thus it is with us. Anything is deemed sufficient to justify our refusal of God's gracious invitations; and from his sentence in reference to them, we know in what light he will regard us and in what way he will deal with us! [Luke 14:16-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.16-24).

The woe denounced against such conduct leads us to consider:

***~~II. The evil of striving with God.~~***

It cannot possibly be painted in too strong of colors:

***~~1. Striving with God is presumptuous.~~***

In the words following my text, this is set forth by two very opposite illustrations.

Let us conceive a piece of clay, dissatisfied with the form given to it by the potter, rising up against the potter, and accusing him of ignorance or injustice; should we not say, that it was presumptuous in the extreme?

Or, let us suppose a child to rise up against his parents; and to ask the one why he did not beget, and the other why she did not bring forth, a more perfect being. Should we not think that he arrogated to himself an authority which did not belong to him? Thus, then, it is with all who in any way strive with their Maker; they are altogether out of their place, and, in the whole of their conduct, are guilty of the most unwarrantable presumption!

***~~2. Striving with God is foolish.~~***

Can anyone suppose that he shall prevail against his Maker? As well might the clay hope to prevail against the potter, who can see nothing in his work but arrogance and folly. And so God has told us, "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure! [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.10)".

**3. Striving with God is ruinous.**

Vain, utterly vain, is such a contest as this. And so we are plainly warned. *What would be the outcome of a contest between briers and thorns—and a devouring fire?*Such will be the outcome of the strife between God and his rebellious creatures, "Who would set briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, and burn them up together! [Isaiah 27:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.4)." That pointed interrogation: "Who has hardened himself against God, and prospered?" must forever determine this question; and show, that to "strive with our Maker" is, to involve ourselves in inevitable and eternal ruin!

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. In a way of reproof.~~***

Who among us has not been guilty of the crime here reprobated? Yes, whose life has not been one continued act of rebellion against God! Now, if it were "our Maker" only that had been so treated by us, no words would have been sufficient to declare the enormity of our crime. But our Maker has been our Redeemer also; yes, and has given his own life a ransom for sinners—yet have we "trodden under foot his blood" by our contemptuous indifference, and even "crucified him afresh" by our continuance in sin. Judge then, what we deserve at God's hands.

And now let me ask, whether you intend to persist in this conduct? If you do, I can say nothing but what Paul said to people of this character, "Your damnation is just! [Romans 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.8)."

***~~2. In a way of compassionate exhortation.~~***

The Prophet Jeremiah, having stated the very argument before us, and shown that God might justly, as a potter, mar the work which had presumed to rise up against him—goes on to observe, that, notwithstanding all our past guilt, God is yet ready to forgive us, if only with penitent and contrite hearts we turn unto him, [Jeremiah 18:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 18.6-8).

I am happy to confirm this blessed sentiment; yes, and to declare, that not one, whatever may have been his guilt in past times, shall ever be cast out, provided he comes in the name of Jesus Christ, founding his hope on His sin-atoning sacrifice, and His all-prevailing intercession. As God's servant, then, I now announce to you these blessed tidings; and declare, in God's name, that "though your sins may have been as red as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they have been as crimson, they shall be as wool! [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18)." Only cease from strife on your part, and God will be reconciled to you, and be your God, forever and ever!

***~~#941~~***

***~~THE EXTENT AND CERTAINTY OF ISRAEL'S SALVATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 45:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.17)~~***

"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end!"

*As in the dispensations of God's providence, we behold a mixture of mercy and judgment—so in the records of his grace we see promises and threatenings continually interwoven*. Declarations so opposite, standing in immediate contrast with each other, give to each other a double force and energy, more especially when, as in the passage before us, compared with the preceding verse, they are expressed in similar terms. In this view the promise in the text deserves particular attention. In considering it we shall show,

***~~I. Who they are that are comprehended under the name "Israel".~~***

We are not to limit this name to the Jews; nor even to comprehend all the Jews under it; since "*all are not Israel that are of Israel*, [Romans 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6)."

***~~1. True Israel includes those who worship God.~~***

This name was originally given to *Jacob*by God himself on account of his having "wrestled all night" in prayer until he obtained the blessing he desired, [Genesis 32:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.24); [Genesis 32:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.28). From him it passed to his natural descendants; but *has in all ages more eminently characterized his spiritual seed, who, like him, "worship God in spirit and in truth*."

Our Lord, seeing Nathanael, called him an "Israelite indeed;" and, on finding how much Nathanael was surprised by such an appellation from a stranger, assured him that "he had seen him under the fig-tree, [John 1:47-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.47-48)." Most probably Nathanael, supposing that no human eye beheld him, had been praying there to God; and our Lord, adverting to this circumstance as well as to his integrity, addressed him by a name that marked his character in both respects. "When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him: Here is a *true Israelite*, in whom there is nothing false, [John 1:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.47)."

In the same way, every true Israelite is frequent at the throne of grace; and God, who sees in secret, will testify of him: In such and such a place I saw you lifting up your heart to me, and imploring my blessing with your whole soul.

***~~2. True Israel includes those who worship God alone.~~***

There were some among the Jews who feared the Lord, and yet served other gods, [2 Kings 17:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 17.33) and [Zephaniah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 1.5). Just so, among ourselves there are many who would be thought to fear God, while they are endeavoring to reconcile the inconsistent services of God and mammon. But Israel stands directly opposed to such characters in the context, verse 16; they not only will not make or worship idols of wood or stone, but they will harbor no idols in the heart; they will not provoke the Lord to jealousy by any hidden abominations, [Ezekiel 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 14.3), but labor to be "Israelites indeed, in whom is no deceit."

Now since it is promised to such people that they shall be saved, it will be proper to inquire,

***~~II. In what way true Israelites shall be saved.~~***

The Lord Jesus Christ is the person mentioned in the text as the author of their salvation. Compare verse 23 with [Romans 14:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.10-11).

***~~1. They are saved by the merit of Christ's sin-atoning blood.~~***

Whatever integrity of heart any man may possess, or however fervent he may be in his supplications before God, he must be saved in the same way as any other sinner, and enter in at the same door with publicans and harlots! *His very best services are polluted; and he needs to be cleansed from "the iniquity of his holy things" as much as from the vilest transgressions.*Nor is there any other fountain opened for sin but that which was opened upon Mount Calvary! Nothing but the blood of Christ can ever cleanse from sin; the holiest man that ever lived must be "accepted in the beloved;" "nor is there salvation for him in any other;" even Paul himself, notwithstanding all his legal and evangelical obedience, desired to be "found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is from God by faith in Christ! [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)." And "in the same adorable Lord must all the seed of Israel be justified, and must glory, verse 25."

***~~2. They are saved by the efficacy of Christ's grace.~~***

It is not by any efforts of their own that Israel are enabled to differ from others, "they are saved, not by the exercise of created power, but in the Lord their God, [Hosea 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 1.7)." They must all adopt the same humiliating confession, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength, verse 24."

Are they strong? it is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.10).

Do they gain the victory? they must thank God for giving it them through Jesus Christ our Lord, [Romans 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.25).

"In him all their fresh springs are found;" "out of his fullness they receive continually grace for grace;" and if this lock were shorn, they would instantly become weak as other men, alluding to [Judges 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 16.17). Being fully assured of this, they evince that they are the true Israel by:  
worshiping God in the spirit,  
rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and  
having no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.3).

For their abundant consolation God declares,

***~~III. The extent and certainty of every true Israelite's salvation.~~***

***~~As to the certainty of their salvation, no words can more fully express it, than those which are now before us.~~***

God absolutely declares that "Israel shall be saved;" lest we should limit our expectations to some temporal benefit, he assures us that the salvation he will afford them, shall be "everlasting;" and lest we should still be slow of heart to believe, he repeats his assertion in terms as strong and energetic as language can afford, or imagination can conceive.

The same truth is confirmed in every page of the sacred volume, and that too in the richest variety of expression, in order more effectually to engage our minds and establish our faith.

Has God spoken all these things merely to deceive us? "Has he said, and will he not do it; has he spoken, and will he not make it good?" Let this then be received as an infallible truth, that whatever may become of others, "Israel shall be saved;" nor shall any difficulties, any dangers, or all the conspiracies of earth and Hell, ever make void this promise in any single instance to all eternity! [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29).

***~~Nor can anything be added to enhance the greatness of their salvation.~~***

It shall be so perfect, that there shall be nothing lacking to complete it. Their "sins shall all be cast into the very depths of the sea." However high their expectations may be raised, they shall "never be ashamed;" nor, however strong their confidence may be, shall they "ever be confounded." They shall appear before God with holy boldness; they may even now, as they shall also at the bar of judgment, adopt the triumphant language of the apostle, "Who is he who shall lay anything to my charge? It is God who justifies! Who is he who shall condemn? It is Christ that died."

Yes, they may lay claim to all that God himself can give in time and eternity; and, neither in time nor in eternity, shall they be disappointed of their hope. Their felicity shall begin the very instant they believe in Christ; and shall be coexistent with their own existence.

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. The idolatrous worldling.~~***

It is not only "the maker of idols," but he who "sets up idols in his *heart*," that is an idolater in the sight of God! If we "love and serve the creature more than the Creator," we are as truly idolaters, as if we bowed down to stocks and stones; and do not the consciences of many testify, that their *hearts are incomparably more set upon the world, than on God?*

*If they compare their devotion before God, with their zeal about earthly things—may they not see that they differ widely from the true*Israel? Shall we then say to them, that they shall be "saved with an everlasting salvation? Should we not speak more truly if we were even to reverse the terms, and declare the judgments of God against them? Yes, indeed! For though they now will scarcely admit a doubt or a fear respecting their eternal state—God has warned them, in the very words before the text, that "they shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them; they shall all go to confusion together."

But is there no way for their escape? Blessed be God, there is; if they believe in Christ, they shall yet be saved; for "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" and his command to them is, "Look unto me and be saved, [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1)." Let them but prostrate themselves at the foot of his cross, seeking redemption through his precious blood, and they shall yet become *monuments of his pardoning mercy, and his sanctifying grace!*

***~~2. The true Israelite.~~***

"Happy are you, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord! [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29)." What a mercy is it to have God himself saying respecting you: Israel shall be saved! Possibly you may meet with many troubles in your way to glory; but you need not regard them, as long as you have the promise that you shall survive them all. Perhaps, like Paul and those who were with him in the ship, you may be so tossed with tempest, as to be brought almost to despair; but God had promised that not a hair of their head should perish; and though they suffered shipwreck—yet was his Word fulfilled to them; for all of them, some on boards and others on broken pieces of the ship, got safe to shore! [Acts 27:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 27.34); [Acts 27:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 27.44).

Thus shall it be with you also. You may, as thousands have before you, suffer the loss of all earthly comforts; but God's Word shall not be broken! He has promised; and he is not only able, but determined to perform. Look forward then with comfort to death and judgment, and know that that day which shall be to others the beginning of sorrows—shall be to you the commencement of eternal joy!

***~~#942~~***

***~~JEHOVAH A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR~~***

***~~[Isaiah 45:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.21)~~***

"There is no God beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me!"

To us, who have been habituated from our infancy to hear of none but the true and living God, it seems incredible that man should be so stupid and selfish as to bow down to stocks and stones, and to worship them as gods. But not only is mankind in general prone to idolatry, but even the people of God themselves, who had seen all the wonders wrought by Jehovah in Egypt, were ever ready to turn aside from him, and to worship the work of their own hands. Hence we see so much in the prophetic writings on the subject of idolatry, and in vindication of Jehovah as the only true God.

In the passage before us, God has appealed to the evidence which he had given of his exclusive right to the regards of his people; in that he had foretold future events, which came to pass agreeably to his predictions; while none of the gods of the heathen had ever pretended to any such power. And in the words before us he maintains his own supremacy, by a further statement of his character as a just God and a Savior.

Let us consider,

***~~I. The character of God as here stated.~~***

***~~1. Consider the character of God, as contrasted with that of all the heathen deities.~~***

Whatever their poor deluded votaries might imagine, it was not in their idol's power either to inflict or to avert evil. This is put in a striking point of view by the Prophet Jeremiah, "For the customs of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good! [Jeremiah 10:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 10.3-5)." But Jehovah is alike able both to save or to destroy.

See whether his JUSTICE is not marked in his conduct towards the fallen angels, whom he expelled from Heaven for their sin.

See his wrath towards the antediluvian world, which, with the exception of a single family of eight people, he destroyed with a universal deluge!

See what is his indignation against sin, as marked in the judgments executed on Sodom and Gomorrah.

See it, also, as demonstrated in the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, or of Ananias and Sapphira.

But the instances are too numerous to be mentioned. No one can have read the Scriptures of truth, and not see that God is just in punishing iniquity; and that to those who live in sin, he is, and will be, "a consuming! fire [Deuteronomy 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.24) and [Hebrews 12:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.29)."

On the other hand, he is a SAVIOR also to all who put their trust in him. Behold his interposition in behalf of Noah and his family, while all the rest of the world were destroyed.

Or see the deliverance he gave to his people from their bondage in Egypt; or how he carried them through the wilderness, and established them in the land of Canaan.

Or view the miracles wrought by our blessed Savior and his Apostles; and then say, whether there be any bounds to Jehovah's mercy or power!

But the comparison between Jehovah and the heathen deities would be utterly absurd, if it were not that the more than brutish stupidity of mankind called fur such illustrations for the conviction of their minds.

**2.** **Consider the character of God, as shining forth in his own proper and harmonious perfections.**

It is in the union of these two perfections of justice and mercy, that the glory of the Godhead is most fully seen. We must look at justice as exercised in a way of mercy; and mercy as displayed in a way of justice, if we would at all appreciate aright the character of our God. He, of his own unbounded love and mercy, determined to save our fallen race. But would he leave sin unpunished? No! He would punish sin, and yet save the sinner! And, in order to that, he gave his only-begotten Son to be the substitute of the sinful man, that in him sin might receive its just recompense, and by him a righteousness might be wrought out for man; so that God might be just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in him.

*By this his justice shines forth more awfully than if he had executed vengeance on the whole human race*; and his mercy more richly than if he had pardoned all without such an atonement offered for them. The gift of his only-begotten Son reflects a light on these perfections which can be seen in nothing else; and which infinitely exceeds any that can be found in a separate and disjointed view of them, as exercised towards our sinful world.

Let us then proceed to contemplate,

***~~II. The regard due to God under that character.~~***

This part of my subject is altogether inexhaustible. But I will confine myself to the mention of three effects, which such a view of God as is here exhibited should produce:

***~~1. Fear.~~***

As for the Heathen deities, there is not one that merits the smallest possible regard. But who will not fear the Lord our God? This is the very improvement which the Prophet Jeremiah suggests, on instituting the comparison between the two, "Forasmuch as there is none like unto you, O Lord; you are great; and your name is great in might; who would not *fear*you, O king of nations! [Jeremiah 10:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 10.6-7)."

The same reflection is made by all the redeemed in Heaven, while singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, "They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, O King of saints. Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy! [Revelation 15:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 15.3-4)."

It is of immense importance, brethren, that you should duly estimate this thought. For many, from conceiving of God as "a Savior," forget that he is "just." But indeed he is a holy God, who "cannot look upon iniquity without the utmost abhorrence of it [Habakkuk 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 1.13);" and he has warned us, that, notwithstanding his great delight in mercy, "he will not clear the guilty! [Exodus 34:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.6-7)." No indeed, "upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup! [Psalm 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 9.17); [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.6)." I say, then, to every one of you, "Fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him! [Matthew 10:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.28)."

***~~2. Trust.~~***

As people, previous to the awakening of their souls, are ready to think of God as *all mercy*; so, after that they begin to be convinced of sin, they are prone to run to a contrary extreme, and to think of God as though he were averse to mercy, and intent only on the vindication of his injured Majesty.

But know brethren, that mercy is that in which he chiefly delights, "judgment is his strange act," to which he never proceeds, until he has exercised forbearance towards us to the uttermost. Call to mind his exceeding great and precious promises; and then say whether any sinner in the universe has reason to despond, provided only he desires mercy at the hands of God? Or rather, consider what God has done in giving his only dear Son to die for you; would he have done this, if he were backward to the exercise of mercy? *Carry all your sins to him, without questioning for one moment his willingness to pardon; and know, that "if you go to him in the name of his dear Son, he will never cast you out!*[John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37)."

***~~3. Obedience.~~***

This is due to him from you, as creatures—what then is it, as redeemed sinners? I will venture to ask: Is there one of you who believes himself liable to his wrath, and yet a partaker of his grace, that would even wish to be released from his obligations to obey him? No; I am sure that every one who views God in his complex character, as "a just God, and yet a Savior," will desire to honor God with all his faculties and powers; and will consecrate himself to God as a living sacrifice, under a full conviction, that if this entire surrender of himself to God be a necessary, it is no less "a reasonable and delightful service, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)."

It is impossible to have any just views of "the love of Christ, and not be constrained by it to live altogether to His praise and glory [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14-15)."

***~~#943~~***

***~~LOOKING TO CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)~~***

"Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other!"

Many consider the Scriptures merely a history of past events, and imagine that the declarations contained in it are to be confined to those people for whose immediate use they were written. But such an idea reduces the sacred volume to a dead letter, calculated indeed to amuse the curious, but not to awaken the secure sinner, or comfort the afflicted saint. But there are numberless passages which, though originally applied to individual people, are quoted by the Apostles as applicable to mankind in every age. Doubtless then, the invitation before us, though primarily addressed to idolaters, is intended to be sounded forth throughout all the world. Let us then consider,

***~~I. The invitation.~~***

The person, who is here speaking, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ; since the very words following the text are quoted by an inspired Apostle as issuing from his mouth, [Romans 14:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.10-11). Here,

***~~1. He directs us what means to use in order to salvation.~~***

"*Looking*to Jesus" is a figurative expression of the same import with many others used in Scripture, such as *coming*to him, *fleeing*to him, etc. Its meaning is obvious, especially when connected with salvation as the end to be attained by it. One immediately perceives the state of the cripple's mind, of whom it is said, that he gave heed to Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them, [Acts 3:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.4-5). Nor can we be at any loss to ascertain the meaning of looking to Christ for salvation—it must import:  
a humble sense of our lost estate,  
an ardent desire after his offered mercy,  
and a persuasion that he is able to impart the blessings we stand in need of.

Without such views, such desires, and such a faith, we should no more look to him for salvation than a person in health would go to a physician, or make use of his prescriptions, [Mark 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 2.17).

If anything can clearly exemplify the nature of this duty, it is the state of the wounded Israelites when they looked to the bronze serpent, [Numbers 21:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 21.7-9); they felt their wounds, they knew them to be incurable by human effort, they were convinced that they must quickly perish if they did not use the appointed means, and they turned their eyes towards it in hope of experiencing the promised recovery. And exactly thus must we look to Christ, if we would be made partakers of his salvation, [John 3:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.14-15).

***~~2. He promises that we shall not use those means in vain.~~***

His words undoubtedly imply a promise, though they are not delivered in the form of one. They consider all people as liable to the wrath of God. They are not addressed to sinners of a peculiarly atrocious character, but to "all the ends of the earth." But while they thus insinuate that none can save themselves, they offer salvation to all without any distinction of character, provided they follow the direction given to them.

Such shall surely be saved from wrath; their sins, however great and manifold, shall be forgiven. The infection that pervades their souls shall be healed. Yes, more, the favor of God, the beauty of holiness, and all the glory of Heaven shall be imparted to them. The salvation here spoken of is justly called, "The salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory!" and in the name of Christ we can promise it to all who comply with the terms on which it is offered to them.

Alluring as this invitation is, it derives additional importance from,

***~~II. The arguments with which it is enforced.~~***

***~~1. Our blessed Lord reminds them of His all sufficiency to save them.~~***

That Christ is God, is a truth on which our present and eternal happiness depends; nor is there lacking all that evidence for it which the most scrupulous or doubtful mind can require, [John 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.1). [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5). Indeed, if he were a mere creature, however exalted, we might well question his authority to issue such a command, or his ability to impart the promised blessing; but his Godhead at once enforces both his direction and his promise: '"Look unto me; for I am God," and enjoins you to do so at the peril of your souls. "You shall be saved; for I am God," and I am therefore able to save you to the very uttermost. Were I a creature, you might be afraid to trust in me; but is not the blood of the incarnate God sufficient to make atonement for your sin? Is not the arm of God able to subdue your enemies before you? Or is there any "variableness or shadow of turning in me," that you should question my fidelity? I am "the God who never changes!" Know then that while my Godhead is your warrant for looking to me, it is my pledge to you for the performance of my promise.' My brethren, can you resist the force of such an argument?

***~~2. Our blessed Lord reminds them of the insufficiency of every other hope.~~***

We are prone to look to every other being for help rather than to Christ; but he plainly warns us that "there is no other." Could we obtain salvation by any other means, the force of his invitation would be enervated; however the way prescribed by him might deserve a preference, we would feel ourselves, as it were, at liberty to disregard it. But in vain will be our utmost exertions, if we endeavor to save ourselves by any methods of man's device. We are "shut up unto the faith that is revealed."

*We may as well attempt to create an universe as to atone for our sin, or to fulfill the strict commands of God's law!*There is no remedy but that proposed, of looking unto Jesus, "there is no other name given under Heaven whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." Observe then the weight of this argument also; it is as though Jesus had said, "To whom will you go? I, and I alone, have the words of eternal life! [John 6:68](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.68). If you follow after righteousness in any other way, you will never attain unto it [Romans 9:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.31-32); you have but one alternative, to look unto me—or to perish forever!" may the Lord grant that, if we are not drawn by love, we may at least be impelled by necessity, to accept his invitation!

***~~We would yet further address this invitation to:~~***

***~~1. Those who are careless and indifferent about salvation.~~***

*How lamentable is it, that Jesus should thus invite sinners, and they be altogether inattentive to his voice!*

You careless sinners, consider Jesus as addressing you upon his first entrance into the world: 'Look unto me, and see how I have humbled myself for you; though I am God—yet have I taken upon myself your nature, that I might save your souls. I am come from Heaven to seek and save you. O let not such condescension and love be lost upon you.'

Think again that you hear him speaking to you from the garden of Gethsemane: 'Look unto me, and behold how I am overcome with agony, and bathed from head to foot in a bloody sweat! This, sinners, is for you; it is your guilt that weighs me down, and your curse that I am now enduring; reflect a moment on the evil and danger of your state! If sin has so overwhelmed your incarnate God, how will you endure the punishment of it to all eternity?'

Suppose him yet again calling to you from the cross: 'Look unto me, you perishing world; see what a multitude of sorrows encompass me; and how my heart in the midst of me is even like melting wax, so utterly is it consumed by the fire of divine wrath! See, how I am forsaken by my own Father, and am shortly to expire in the midst of all this shame and torment; but it is for you; to save you from everlasting death; and I shall be satisfied with all the travail of my soul, if only you will look to me for salvation; let me but have the joy of saving you, and I am content. But O, let me not pay the price of your souls for nothing.'

Once more, view him seated on his throne of glory, and consider him as addressing you from thence: 'Look unto me; it is for your sakes that I am exalted to this throne; it is that I may impart that salvation to you, which once I purchased for you; as once I governed everything in my divine nature, so now in my mediatorial capacity is all power committed to me, that I may raise you also to a participation of my own glory; and all that I require of you is, to look unto me; O sinners, turn not a deaf ear to my entreaties; but let me save you with an everlasting salvation!'

Are there now any so obdurate as to disregard his voice? Say, beloved, is salvation so slight a matter, that you are indifferent whether you ever obtain it or not? Or are the terms on which it is offered, so grievous, that you cannot bring your minds to submit to them? What easier terms can God himself propose than those, "Look and be saved?" O delay no longer, but say with the prophet, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me! [Micah 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.7)."

***~~2. Those who, through a sense of their unworthiness, dare not accept the salvation offered them.~~***

People who are deeply convinced of their guilt and misery, are apt to think themselves too unworthy to be the objects of divine mercy; and to exclude themselves from the number of those who are invited; 'Can it be true,' say they, 'that Jesus speaks to me; and that I have only to look unto him in order to ensure my everlasting salvation? Surely this invitation cannot be for such a wretch as I am; gladly would I accept it, if I dared; but I shall be only as a dog snatching at "the children's bread.'"

But why should any of you exclude yourselves? Does not Jesus address himself to sinners of every description, even to "all the ends of the earth?" And did you ever hear of one whom he rejected? *If none ever applied to him in vain for the healing of their bodies, shall any look to him in vain for the saving of their souls?*

When he gave this invitation, was he not aware how unworthy you were? Did he not know the extent and efficacy of his own atonement? Did he not consider whether there was anything in your case that was too hard for him to surmount; or did he issue this invitation only to mock and disappoint you?

Let it be granted, you have some reason to doubt his power or his willingness to save you; yet, at least, put him to the trial, and see whether he will fulfill his Word or not. Of this you are sure, that, if he cannot save, no one else can; and that, if he will not, you will, at least, lose nothing by accepting his invitation!

But you need not fear; he is God; and "his mercy as far exceeds your sins, as the heavens are higher than the earth!" Put away then your desponding thoughts, and "encourage yourselves in the Lord your God." Thus shall you be numbered with his redeemed; and spend eternity in singing, "Salvation to God and to the Lamb!"

***~~#944~~***

***~~EXALTATION OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 45:23-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.23-25)~~***

KJV. "I have sworn by myself, the Word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength; even to him shall men comet and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

NIV. "By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult!"

To those who know the infinite importance of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, it is delightful to see the irresistible evidence of it in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Who is it that in the two preceding verses says, "I am the Lord, I am God, a just God and a Savior; there is no God else beside me, there is none beside me, there is no other?"

Is this a creature? Who is this that, in the text, presumes to swear by himself; that arrogates to himself universal dominion; and that so frequently appropriates to himself the incommunicable name, Jehovah? Is this a creature? Who is it that can fulfill the promises here made to his friends, or execute the judgments here denounced against his enemies? Is he a mere creature? No person that is not blinded by prejudice, or warped by controversy, can doubt one moment, but that it is the supreme God who is speaking throughout the whole passage; yet this very passage does Paul expressly apply to Christ, affirming that it was a prediction of his final victory, and of the appearance of the whole human race at his tribunal, [Romans 14:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.10-11).

For the further elucidation of these solemn words we shall consider,

***~~I. The subject-matter of the oath.~~***

To comprehend this aright, we should notice particularly those very opposite circumstances which were appointed to take place, before the predictions in the text were to receive their accomplishment. Christ was to be insulted by his whole nation; and his claims of Messiahship were to be made the subject of profane ridicule; he was not only to be rejected, but to be crucified as a malefactor, and to die as one unable to save himself. His *enemies*were to enjoy a momentary triumph; and his *followers*to be disappointed, dejected, and confounded. But, that these things should not be a stumbling-block to any, it was here foretold that all these circumstances would be speedily reversed. In this view, the oath relates to four things:

**1. The exaltation of Christ.**

Christ, as King of kings, and Lord of lords, had a right to universal empire; every creature was bound to render him an unlimited and unreserved obedience. But it was foreseen that, instead of submitting to him, his creatures would rise up in rebellion against him, and cry out with one voice, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" Christ, however, laughed them to scorn; and told them by his prophet, many hundred years before, that every knee should bow to him, and every tongue take an oath of allegiance to him as the only sovereign of the universe! At least, if they did not do this willingly, as an expression of their sincere subjection, they should do it, in effect, against their will, by suffering the punishment due to their rebellion!

***~~2. The advancement of his kingdom.~~***

While in the world, he was to be considered as vile, yes, as the vilest of mankind; and to appear as weak as other men; but in due time he was to be regarded, not only as righteous and powerful, but as the only source of righteousness and strength to all his creatures. In themselves, all are "ungodly and without strength;" feeling therefore their guilt and helplessness they are to "come to him," each saying for himself, and each animating others to say, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength."

***~~3. The confusion of his enemies.~~***

*Notwithstanding his unspotted innocence, and unbounded kindness—he was to be an object of utter abhorrence to his whole nation.* But their triumph over him was to be of short duration; the time was soon to come, when they should "see him whom they had pierced, and mourn." Their violence was soon to be recompensed upon their own heads, unless by previous repentance and faith in his blood they obtained the remission of their sins. At all events, they would be "ashamed," whether penitent and pardoned, or impenitent and condemned. They should either be made to acknowledge with Paul, that they had been "blasphemers, injurious, persecutors, and the very chief of sinners"—or to confess the justice of that sentence that consigned them over to everlasting misery.

***~~4. The salvation of his people.~~***

His enemies are the seed of profane Esau; but his friends are "the seed of Israel," whose prayers prevailed with God, and whose example they imitate. These were for a time to be as men disappointed of their hopes; but, before long, their expectations, founded on the Word of Christ, were to be abundantly "justified" in the sight of men; and their persons too were to be "justified" in the sight of God; so that both before God and man they should have reason to glory in the name of Jesus. None of them should be left in their forlorn condition; but "all," all without exception, be made to triumph in him as the Rock of their salvation!

Such was the exaltation, and such the consequences of it to himself, to his enemies, and to his believing people, which Christ so long before predicted with a solemn oath; in confirmation of which we proceed to state:

***~~II. The certainty of its accomplishment.~~***

If God had simply asserted these things, it could not fail but that they must come to pass; for, "he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent." But for our fuller conviction and assurance, he has sworn; and "because he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself." His Word is gone forth in righteousness and truth, nor shall it "return," until every jot and tittle of it is fulfilled! But,

***~~1. It has already been accomplished in part.~~***

At the hour of his death, his enemies thought that they had gained their end. He, whom they had arrayed in mock majesty, and crowned with a chaplet of thorns, and before whom they had bowed the knee in derision, crying, Hail, King of the Jews! had expired on the accursed tree, an object of universal execration and abhorrence; and his followers were scattered as sheep that have no shepherd. The leader being destroyed, it seemed as if this infant sect, like others that had preceded it, were crushed, and brought to nothing. It only remained that Jesus should be proved an impostor, by watching his tomb for three days; and then their victory would be complete. But in vain were the stone, the seal, the watch; at the appointed hour he rose triumphant; and the affrighted guards fled to relate the wonderful event.

Now began his exaltation, which speedily reversed the scenes that had been exhibited. His enemies already stood confounded; and propagated an absurd falsehood to conceal their shame. The hopes of his disconsolate people were revived by many infallible proofs of his resurrection. They conversed and ate with him, and beheld him in the very act of ascending into Heaven.

It was but a few days afterwards, when, according to his promise, he sent down the Holy Spirit, and thereby completed the confusion of his enemies, and the triumph of his friends! Instantly no less that three thousand of his most inveterate enemies "bowed the knee to him" and "took, as it were, an oath" of allegiance to him as their rightful sovereign; though they had just before seen him "crucified through weakness," and treated as the most infamous of malefactors, they "came to him" that they might obtain "righteousness and strength."

What confusion now seized the rulers, who still retained their enmity against him! All their efforts were in vain; the more fierce their opposition was, the more did the Word prevail; so that in a little time, not Jerusalem only, but all Judea, yes the whole Roman empire, was filled with converts to the cause of Christ. Now the disciples triumphed in their turn; and from that time myriads in every place have been "justified by his blood," and have "gloried" in his salvation!

***~~2. It shall be yet more fully accomplished at the day of judgment.~~***

It is in reference to this period in particular that the Apostle cites the passage before us, [Romans 14:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.11); and *then*indeed will it be verified to the uttermost. The submission of his people will be more entire, their acknowledgments more grateful, and their glorying more ecstatic, than they could be in this world; while the subjugation of his enemies, and their confusion before him will be complete. When he shall say, as to those of old:

'Many good works I did for you, for which of them did you hate me? for you I left my glory, and veiled myself in human flesh; for you I sojourned upon earth, and died upon the cross; for you I sent my messengers to beseech you in my name to accept of mercy; for which of these things was I a stumbling-block unto you?'

How will they hang down their heads with shame! Eloquent as they now are in vindication of themselves, they will not then have one word to answer. Thus shall it be both to the friends and enemies of Christ; as sure as there is a God in Heaven, possessed of faithfulness and power to fulfill his Word—so sure shall not one jot or tittle of it ever fail of its accomplishment.

***~~Improvement.~~***

***~~1. For conviction.~~***

Nothing surely can be more calculated to awaken the secure than this solemn oath of Jehovah! Methinks God, to fix our attention and obtain belief, stands forth before the assembled universe, and, with his hand lifted up to Heaven, alluding to [Daniel 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 12.7), swears, "As sure as I am God, thus and thus shall it be with my friends and with my enemies." Must not then sinners be more deaf than adders, and more obdurate than rocks, if they do not hear, and repent, at the voice of their God?*O that men would no longer trifle with their eternal interests!*We may argue as we please against the Word of God; but we cannot invalidate its tremendous declarations. Let us then believe and tremble, yes, "believe and obey the Gospel!"

***~~2. For consolation.~~***

God, in his oath, consults more immediately the comfort of his people, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18). They are, alas! too backward to believe his Word; and therefore he confirms it with an oath.

Let every subject then of the Redeemer's kingdom rejoice.

Let their confidence in him both for righteousness and strength be greatly increased.

Let them never doubt, but that his enemies and their enemies, shall soon become his footstool.

Let them know, that they are justified from all their sins.

Let them glory in him as their God and portion!

Difficulties they may, they must, expect; but the Word of God shall not be frustrated, "the counsel of the Lord shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure." Let them only rest on the oath of God, and they shall experience its accomplishment to all eternity.

***~~#945~~***

***~~GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE~~***

**[Isaiah 46:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.3-5)**

KJV. "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, end I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. To whom will you liken me?"

NIV. "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?"

*That men who know nothing of the One true God should form to themselves idols to represent imaginary gods, is not so much to be wondered at; because every man feels himself dependent on some superior Being, though he has no distinct conception of the nature or character of that being*.

But that people who have been instructed in the knowledge of Jehovah, and been themselves eye-witnesses of his mighty works, should have any disposition to renounce him, and to place their dependence on idols of wood and stone, is utterly unaccountable, on any other principle than that of man's total depravity, and radical alienation of heart from God. But such is the fact: man is prone to idolatry; his "carnal mind is enmity against God;" and from the time of the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt to the time of their captivity in Babylon, not all the judgments or mercies with which they were visited from time to time could keep them from indulging their propensity for idolatry. One would have thought that the very things which they had seen, even the deportation of the Babylonish idols by the hands of their enemies, should have been sufficient to convince them, that nothing formed by mortal hands could save a man. The prophet, in Jehovah's name, here appeals to them respecting this: See, says he, what helpless things those idols are! "Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols (unable to move themselves) were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy laden with them; they were a burden to the weary beast; and are themselves gone into captivity! verses 1-2."

'But how different from them am I!' says Jehovah; 'They are carried by their votaries, yes, and by their enemies too, incapable of resistance or of motion. Whereas I carry my people; I have carried them from the very womb; and I "will carry them to hoar hairs," even to the last hour of their lives.'

That we may enter more fully into this description which Jehovah gives of himself, let us consider,

***~~I. What he has done for his redeemed people.~~***

Jehovah addresses his people here as his children; and brings to their minds what he had done for that whole nation in the wilderness.

***~~He had borne them in his arms as a father does his child.~~***

In the wilderness, when the people were required to march, it must of necessity happen that many females were not in a condition to carry their newborn infants, and more especially as the journeys were often of long continuance. Hence the fathers are represented as carrying their children, [Numbers 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 11.12); and under this character God represents himself as having carried them, [Deuteronomy 1:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 1.31).

Now the whole nation at that time were precisely in the state of little infants:  
as ignorant of the way which they were to go;  
as incapable of providing sustenance for themselves;  
as unable to protect themselves from enemies, or from a variety of dangers to which they were exposed.

They needed in every respect Jehovah's care, as much as a new-born infant needs the attention of its parents. And all this care did God bestow upon them.

From the first moment of their departure from Egypt:  
he went before them in the pillar and the cloud;  
he sought out for them the places where they should encamp;  
he regulated all their motions;  
he supplied them with bread from Heaven, and with water from the rock;  
he delivered them from every enemy;  
he carried them in perfect safety for the space of forty years!

They were cast upon him, as it were, from the womb; and from the womb he thus administered to them with parental care and tenderness.

***~~And in this same way, he still carries the true Israel in his arms.~~***

*The nation of Israel typically represented those, who, as believers in Christ, are in a spiritual sense the children of Abraham.*And these who are Israelites indeed, are precisely in the state of the Jews in the wilderness, or of infants in their parents' arms. Their incapacity to guide or support themselves is quite as great, and their need of support from on high as urgent. But God has taken the charge of them, and administered to them whatever their necessities required. Look back, O "remnant of the house of Israel," and say, whether God has not incessantly watched over you for good; whether he has not:  
borne with your weaknesses,  
supplied your needs,  
directed your ways,  
upheld you in your goings,  
and kept you from ten thousand snares, into which you must have inevitably fallen, and by which you must long since have perished, if he had for one hour intermitted his tender care?

You cannot but acknowledge, that to you, as well as to the Jewish nation, is that description applicable, "In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him! [Deuteronomy 32:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.10-12)."

But God further intimates:

***~~II. What he has engaged to do for his redeemed people.~~***

***~~To the Jews he promised a continuance of his care.~~***

The individuals whom he brought forth out of Egypt he allowed to die in the wilderness, on account of their multiplied iniquities. But the nation, as a nation, he preserved; and those children, whom their unbelieving parents supposed to be doomed to inevitable destruction, he brought in safety to the Promised Land! And though, by their innumerable transgressions, the nation has brought down his displeasure upon them, insomuch that they are scattered over the face of the whole earth—yet are they preserved in a way that no other nation under Heaven ever has been, in order that they may ultimately enjoy all the blessings prepared for them. They are at this day living witnesses for him, that "he changes not," but is still the same gracious and compassionate God as ever! This is the import of "I am he." See [Psalm 102:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.27).

***~~To the spiritual Israel also he engages that he will keep them, even to the end.~~***

"His gifts and calling are without repentance, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29)." "Where he has begun a good work, he will carry it on, and perfect it, unto the day of Christ! [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)." If "he has laid in our hearts the foundation of his spiritual temple, he will complete it, [Zechariah 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.9);" and "be the finisher of that faith of which he has been the author, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)." "His ways in this respect are not like the ways of men;" they, either from impotence or change of mind, often relinquish their plans; God never does. In his own mind he considers the blessings which he bestows, not merely as a benefit conferred, but as a pledge of future blessings, "He will not forsake his people, because it has pleased him to make them his people! [1 Samuel 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 12.22)."

Hence we are justified in founding on the experience of past benefits, an assured expectation of future blessing, "You have delivered my soul from death! Will you not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living? [Psalm 56:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.13)."

The very repetitions in our text strongly confirm this important truth, "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you!" And to the same effect the Apostle Paul assuring us that God will keep his engagements with us, uses in one short sentence no less than five negatives, "He will never, never leave you; he will never, never, never forsake you! [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5-6)."

From this statement of his own ways, he teaches us to infer,

***~~III. His unrivaled entitlement to our regard.~~***

"To whom will you liken me?" says he to his people of old. Are any of the gods of the heathen able to effect for their worshipers what I have wrought for you? So I will say to those who have received spiritual blessings at his hands, "To whom will you liken him?"

***~~1. Who in the whole universe are so entitled to your confidence?~~***

Are there any others who could have brought you out of darkness into light, as he has done; or turned you from the power of Satan unto God? Could any of them have preserved you from the snares which Satan has spread for your feet? Who among them is able to keep you in future? Have you any sufficiency in yourselves, so as to "direct your own paths, [Jeremiah 10:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 10.23)," and to maintain your own steadfastness? No! truly—and nothing but a "curse awaits the man who trusts in man, or who makes flesh his arm, [Jeremiah 17:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5-6)." *God alone is equal to this task*—*in him alone therefore must be all our hope, and all our trust!* [2 Corinthians 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.21); 2 Corinthians 3:5.

**2. Who in the whole universe are so entitled to your love.**

Among your fellow-creatures you may have many who, both for their personal qualities and their kindness to you, are entitled to your esteem. But to whom are you indebted, as you are to your Redeeming God?

He has come down from Heaven for you;  
he has died upon the cross for you;  
he has wrought out salvation for you;  
he has by his Holy Spirit imparted that salvation to your souls;  
he has given you that measure of stability which you have already evinced;  
he has engaged his almighty power to keep you even to the end!

Where have you ever found such a Benefactor as he? Where is one who can vie with God in any one particular? Truly in comparison with him the whole creation is but as the dust upon the balance; and therefore you should love him infinitely above all, and say, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you! [Psalm 73:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.25)."

***~~Let me then, in conclusion, address myself,~~***

***~~1. To those who entertain a rival in their hearts.~~***

You can easily see how just God's indignation was against those who worshiped graven images, in preference to him; but know, that he is no less offended with those who "provoke him to jealousy" by "setting up idols in their hearts!" He says, and well may say, "My son, give me your heart! [Proverbs 23:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 23.26)." This is his exclusive right; and if you withhold it from him, it matters not what else you give—anything else is all hateful in his eyes, and never will come before him with acceptance! "Your very prayers are an abomination in his sight, [Proverbs 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 15.8)," and your best sacrifices are only as "the cutting off a dog's neck, or offering swine's blood! [Isaiah 66:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.3)."

***~~2. To those who profess themselves to have experienced God's tender care.~~***

What *gratitude*befits those who are so indebted to their God! Was Israel highly favored above the heathen? Their *obligations*were nothing in comparison with yours. Their *blessings*, though great, were temporal; yours are spiritual and eternal. But look around you and see, how many even of your own friends and relatives are yet in bondage to their sins; while you have been delivered with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm! Look also to those who have been "brought out of the world for a season, and yet been again entangled with it and overcome, [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20);" while you are yet "holding on your way!"

And who is it that has made the difference between you? Must you not say, "By the grace of God I am what I am!" Stir up then your souls to thankfulness, and say, "For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you! [Psalm 71:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 71.5-6)."

And let your confidence in him for the future be entire. Lie in his hands precisely as a little infant in its parent's arms; and look to him, exactly as the Israelites in the wilderness did, to direct your every way, and to supply your every need. It is not possible for your reliance on God to be too simple or too entire. In this respect also is David an excellent pattern for you to follow, "You are He who took me out of the womb; you did make me hope when I was upon my mother's bosom. I was cast upon you from the womb; you are my God from my mother's womb. Do not be far from me! for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Do not be far from me, O Lord! O my strength, hasten to help me! [Psalm 22:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.9-11); [Psalm 22:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.19)."

Let your devotion to him also be unreserved. "You are not your own, but his; and therefore you should glorify him with your bodies and your spirits, which are his! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)." This is what God expects at your hands, "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. [Exodus 19:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 19.4-6)."

Yes, these words I do speak to you in God's name. Your privileges are all a delusion, if they are not productive of this effect; but if they lead to this issue, then is God glorified in you, and you shall before long be glorified with him in the realms of eternal bliss! 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

***~~#946~~***

***~~CHRIST, THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 46:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.12-13)~~***

KJV. "Hearken unto me, you stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory."

NIV. "Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are far from righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel!"

They who deny or doubt the existence of a Supreme Being, may discover his eternal power and godhead by the works of creation.

Likewise, you may ascertain his infinite superiority above all false gods, by the numberless predictions which he has given by his prophets, and the never-failing accomplishment of them in their appointed season.

To this last criterion, God himself refers idolaters in the chapter before us, and challenges them to bring any of their false deities, who should be able to stand in competition with him. To us, who acknowledge his unrivaled glory, there is one thing which displays, in a wonderful manner, the transcendent riches of his grace; I mean, the freeness with which his offers of mercy are made even to the most abandoned of mankind. This remark obviously arises from the words of our text; and will be fully illustrated by considering:

***~~I. The characters addressed.~~***

The words, in their primary meaning, were intended to describe those who were unhumbled by the judgments inflicted on them in the Babylonish captivity, and unaffected with his promises of deliverance from it. As applied to us, they comprise two common characters:

***~~1. Those who feel no remorse for their past sins.~~***

All must acknowledge that they have sinned against God, and that, as sinners, they ought to humble themselves before him. But how many never call their past ways to remembrance, or say with themselves, What have I done? [Jeremiah 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 8.6). Their sins give them no uneasiness; instead of mourning over their offences, they palliate them; and, instead of imploring mercy at God's hands, they deny that they have any need to deprecate his wrath and indignation. And must not such people be called "stout-hearted?" If God himself complains of those who represent it as a vain thing to serve the Lord, that "their words are stout against him, [Malachi 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.13-14)"—then surely the same complaint may justly be made against those who practically declare his service to be a needless yoke, and an intolerable burden.

***~~2. Those who are unconcerned about their eternal salvation.~~***

Many, alas! are as improvident about the future as they are unconcerned about the past. They will profess indeed that Heaven is a desirable portion; but they will never inquire seriously whether they are in the way to attain it; nor ever exert themselves in earnest to secure it. If an empty wish, or a formal round of duties, will suffice for the acquisition of it, they will be content to pay the price; but if they are to run as in a race, and to fight as in a single combat, in order to have it awarded to them—they do not think it worth the effort. What now must we say of these, but that they are "far from righteousness and salvation?" Surely, if they be far from a *concern*about these things, much more must they be from the *attainment*of them.

When we reflect upon the characters here addressed, how shall we stand amazed at:

**II. The address itself.**

The prophet, in these words, foretold both the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and the coming of their Messiah to save the world. To sinners of our day, the text declares:

***~~1. That God has provided a Savior for them.~~***

Christ is undoubtedly that "salvation whom God has placed in Zion," and whom we are commanded to call, "The Lord our righteousness." Him has "God sent into the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself!" Hearken to this, you stout-hearted; though you have despised your God, your God has not despised you—but has pitied your fallen state, and made provision for your restoration to happiness. *Yes, for the angels that fell, he instantly "prepared" a place of unutterable and everlasting torment!*[Matthew 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.41). But for you he prepared a Savior, even his only dear Son. And shall not this make your obdurate hearts relent? Or will you receive such stupendous grace in vain?

***~~2. That God now offers salvation to them.~~***

This salvation is near to all of us, and the tidings of it are now sounding in our ears. It is placed in this our Zion as much as ever it was in Zion of old. Christ is now present in his ordinances according to his promise; and will be so even to the end of the world. At this very hour he "proclaims liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." To you, even to you, you stout-hearted, is "the Word of this salvation sent!" Your past iniquities shall be forgiven, if only you will humble yourselves before him. Nor is this all; your God will not only restore you to his favor, but will "glory" over you with unutterable joy. "You shall be even a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hands! [Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.3)." Do not let then your hearts continue hardened against him; but let his transcendent "goodness lead you to repentance."

***~~Advice.~~***

***~~1. Endeavor to see your obduracy in its true colors.~~***

If you are free from gross sins, you think but little of an unhumbled and impenitent state. But what can be worse than a seared conscience and a callous heart? What can be worse than to feel:  
no sorrow or contrition for your past offences,  
no desire to please your God,  
no anxiety to save your souls?

Be assured that such a state, with whatever name it may be glossed over, is hateful in the extreme; and that, if continued in, it will prove as fatal as a course of open profligacy and profaneness!

***~~2. Fear lest God should give you up to final impenitence.~~***

The present address, which is made by God himself, shows clearly enough that he "has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." But he is a holy God; nor will his Spirit "always strive with man." He may be provoked at last to "swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest." This he most assuredly does with respect to many, who "grieve his Spirit" until they have altogether "quenched" his sacred motions. "Today therefore, while it is called today, harden not your hearts," "lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!"

***~~3. Think what regret you will feel, when that salvation, which is now so near you, shall be removed to an unapproachable distance.~~***

Of all the miseries that can afflict a soul in the eternal world, we cannot conceive any more distressing than the thought of having had a Savior provided for us, and salvation through him offered to us—and we rejected both the Savior and His salvation! No words can express the sense which a self-ruined sinner will have of his folly, when he sees in one view the *mercies*he has slighted, and the *judgments*he has brought upon himself.

Now he can be "far from righteousness," and glory in his shame; but then he will see that, which even courted his embraces here, removed afar off indeed; so far, as to preclude a possibility of ever attaining the possession of it. May the Lord grant, that they who have hitherto slighted these overtures of mercy, may now embrace them with their whole hearts!

***~~#947~~***

***~~OFFICES OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 48:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.16)~~***

"Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, has sent me."

So mysterious and important a doctrine as that of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead ought not to be founded on any grounds which are not clear, strong, adequate, convincing. But it may be illustrated from passages on which we could not altogether venture to establish it. Such is the passage which I have now brought before you.

It might well be supposed, that so important a doctrine as this should pervade the Holy Scriptures, just in the way that all the fundamental doctrines of our religion do; and that there should be intimations of it in many places, where the express mention of it would not be expected to occur. And this we find throughout the whole Scriptures, as I shall presently take occasion to show.

In the whole chapter which precedes this, from whence my text is taken, God is declaring that he will destroy Babylon, and bring out from thence his captive people, and restore them to their own land; and, throughout the chapter which is before us, he warns his people to bear in remembrance, that he had foretold this event several hundred years before it would be accomplished; and that, consequently, when it should occur, they must trace it, not, as they would be ready to do, to their idols—but to Jehovah himself, who had foreordained it for the glory of his own name, and who had designed it to be a type of a yet greater deliverance, which he would in due season effect for a ruined world. It is in this connection that the speaker says, "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, has sent me, "that is, has commissioned me to announce to you these great events.

But it is a matter of doubt, who the speaker is. If it is the prophet, then the sense of the passage is clear; but if it is the same divine Person as is speaking throughout the whole context, namely, the Son of God, the Savior of Israel, the Messiah, then a small alteration must be made in our translation; and the passage must be read, "Now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit;" that is, has *sent me to accomplish this great deliverance, and his Spirit to reveal it to you*; and both myself and the Holy Spirit, to accomplish that infinitely greater deliverance that is prefigured by it. This is the sense which the most approved expositors adopt, and which therefore I also shall follow; though, as far as respects the use which I shall make of the passage, it is of no importance which construction we prefer; since, in either case, a plurality of persons in the Godhead is clearly intimated. I propose, then, to consider,

***~~I. The distinction of Persons in the Godhead.~~***

I have already observed, that we might reasonably expect the doctrine of the Trinity, if it is indeed true, to pervade the Holy Scriptures throughout. Accordingly, we do find it more or less clearly intimated from the beginning.

***~~1. The Trinity in the Old Testament.~~***

In the very first chapter of the Bible, where the creation of all things is declared, there is a plurality of persons mentioned, as determining to complete the whole by the formation of man, "Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness, [Genesis 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 1.26)."

So again, at the expulsion of man from Paradise, a similar representation of God is given, "The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of *us*, to know good and evil, [Genesis 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.22)."

At the building of the Tower of Babel, also, God speaks of himself in the same manner, "Let *us*go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech, [Genesis 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 11.7)."

In like manner, when the Messiah is spoken of, a plurality of persons in the Godhead is almost always marked.

Is his qualification for his work stated? It is said, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, [Isaiah 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2)."

Is his mission plainly declared? It is said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, [Isaiah 61:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1)."

Is the effect of his mission foretold? It is said, "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the Lord Almighty has sent me unto you, [Zechariah 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.11)."

***~~2. The Trinity in the New Testament.~~***

The Savior's incarnation was announced in these terms to his Virgin Mother, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore, also, that holy One which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God, [Luke 1:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.35)."

Was he consecrated to his Mediatorial office at his baptism? The account given of it is, "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up immediately out of the water; and, lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and, lo! a voice from Heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased! [Matthew 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 3.16-17)."

Were disciples to be gathered to him by his Gospel? He said, "Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, [Matthew 28:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.19)."

Were they to receive all kinds of blessings from God? They are instructed distinctly to acknowledge the Three Persons of the Godhead; and to pray, that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, may be with them! 2 Corinthians 13:14."

But this distinction of Persons in the Godhead will more clearly appear, by considering,

***~~II. The particular offices which they severally sustain in the economy of redemption.~~***

**God the Father is the fountain from whom the whole plan of salvation proceeds.**

It is he who "sends his Son," and "delivers him up for us all." It is he, also, who "sends the Holy Spirit," to apply to our souls the benefits which Christ has purchased for us. On this part of our subject it is unnecessary to enlarge, because respecting it we are all agreed.

***~~The Lord Jesus Christ has come to accomplish salvation for us.~~***

As Mediator, God and man, he was the Father's servant, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1), sent to effect for us this great salvation. In undertaking the work, he voluntarily engaged to redeem us; saying, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do your will, O my God; yes, your Law is within my heart! [Psalm 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.6-8)." In executing the work, he acted freely throughout, "giving himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God of a sweet-smelling savor, [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.2)." Yes, on the very cross "he, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, [Hebrews 9:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.14)."

And, as he voluntarily laid down his life for us, so by his own power he resumed, it [John 10:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.18); and went up to Heaven to "intercede for us, [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25)," and "to prepare a place for us, [John 14:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.2)," and to administer to us all needful grace, [Ephesians 1:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.22-23); and in due time he will come again, and take us to himself, [John 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.3), and invest us with crowns and kingdoms like his own, [Luke 22:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.29).

***~~The Holy Spirit applies to us the salvation that the Father planned, and Lord Jesus has accomplished.~~***

As by the Spirit's agency the man Jesus was enabled to execute the whole of his work; so, when the Savior had gone to Heaven, the Spirit descended, to complete the work which Jesus had begun.

"He testified of Christ," by the miraculous powers which he imparted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26).

He also "glorified Christ, by taking of the things that were his, and showing them unto his disciples, [John 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14)."

To this very hour does he, by the mighty operation of his power on the souls of men, "convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, [John 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.8)."

He "comforts them" in their sorrows, [John 14:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.16)."

He "sanctifies them throughout, 1 Thessalonians 5:23."

He "bears witness to them that they are the Lord's, [Romans 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.16)."

He "seals them unto the day of redemption, [Ephesians 1:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.13-14)."

And at the last day, "as he raised Christ himself from the dead, so will he raise us also "to a final participation of his kingdom and glory! [Romans 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.11)."

And now, in all this, have I spoken too minutely, or too confidently? I have said no more than what Peter has spoken in one short verse; when he said of all true believers, that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)."

Let me now proceed to show,

**III. The comfort which the knowledge of the Trinity is calculated to impart.**

Were I to enter at all fully into this subject, I would not know where to begin, or where to end. But it must suffice to mention two things; which must, of necessity, present themselves to every reflecting mind.

Have the Sacred Three so concurred in the work of redemption? Then we may be assured of:

***~~1. The readiness of God to save sinners.~~***

Men exceedingly mistake this matter. They think themselves willing to be saved; they doubt only of God's willingness to save them. But were men as willing to accept salvation as God is to bestow it, not one would ever perish!

Did God, unsolicited, provide a Savior for sinners?

Did the Lord Jesus Christ undertake to *accomplish*salvation for sinners?

Did the Holy Spirit engage to *apply*that salvation to sinners!

And can we doubt whether God is willing to save even the very chief of sinners?

I am well aware, that men will pretend to found their doubts only on their own unworthiness. But where is any worthiness to be found in man? Who was worthy:  
that God should devise this plan;  
or that Christ should accomplish it;  
or that the Holy Spirit should apply it?

Or who will presume to stand on the footing of his own worthiness, even of the food he eats, or of the air he breathes?

*It is not as worthy that we are to come to God, but as unworthy; and the more we feel our unworthiness, the more acceptable shall we be to God*; who bids us come to him for everything, "without money and without price!"

Only reflect on what God has already done for you; and you may well say, "He who has sent his Son to die for me, and his Spirit to renew me—how shall he not with them also freely give me all things? [Romans 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.32)."

***~~2. The sufficiency of the salvation provided for sinners.~~***

What is there that the wisdom of the *Father*has overlooked?

Wherein has the *Lord Jesus Christ*failed to accomplish the work assigned him?

What is there which the *Holy Spirit*is unable or unwilling to impart?

Find some flaw; find some defect; before you call in question either the suitableness or sufficiency of this salvation. If you were to be saved by your own power or goodness, you might well be filled with doubts and fears; but when all that the *Father's love*, the *Son's merit*, and the *Spirit's power* can effect, is offered to you freely, you must needs say, "All things are mine; and I am Christ's; and Christ is God's! [1 Corinthians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22-23)."

Thus have we taken the passage according to a rendering somewhat different from that which our version has given us. But, for our application of it, we will take it in the sense in which the translators of our Bible understood it; and we will not only consider it as spoken by the prophet to the Church at his day, but we will even adopt it ourselves, as an address which we at this time are authorized and commissioned to deliver unto you,

***~~"Now the Lord God and his Spirit has sent me"—yes, even me:~~***

***~~1. To testify to you of this salvation.~~***

Prophets and apostles had no other commission than that which is given to every faithful minister of Christ; which is, "to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." They indeed were inspired; and were, many of them at least, endued with miraculous powers, to which we can make no pretensions; but the message borne by them and us is one and the same, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This ministry of reconciliation, I say, is committed unto us; and "we, as ambassadors of God, beseech you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God! [2 Corinthians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.20)."

***~~2. To urge your acceptance of this salvation.~~***

Who among you does not need it? The captivity of Israel in Babylon is but a very faint image of your captivity to sin and Satan. And what is there under Heaven to be compared with it?

***~~If you had crowns and kingdoms, they could not make you happy; and in a short time they would vanish away, and leave you more destitute than the most miserable man on earth.~~***

O let me remind you what stupendous efforts have been made by God for you! and let me entreat you not to receive this grace in vain!"

***~~3. To remind you that all the glory of this salvation must be God's alone!~~***

This was the principal point which the prophet was ordered to inculcate. The people were in danger of ascribing to their idols what was done by Jehovah alone. And is there not the same tendency among you? Are not you prone to think that, in some respect, your own arm has saved you? Who has not often "sacrificed to his own net, and burned incense to his own dragnet?" O brethren, remember that "Jehovah is a jealous God," and "will not give his glory to another."

I demand of you, therefore, that you give all the glory to the Triune God; and that you begin on earth the song which is prepared for you in Heaven, even "blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever, [Revelation 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.13)."

***~~#948~~***

***~~GOD'S TENDER CONCERN FOR HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 48:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.17-18)~~***

KJV. "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God, which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go. O that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the leaves of the sea.

NIV. "This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea!"

The reducing of religion to a *system*is not without some use; because, by an orderly arrangement of all its parts, we are enabled to attain both a comprehensive and distinct view of the whole. But, when we presume to wrest any passages, or to weaken their true meaning, merely because they do not seem to accord with our system—we usurp a power that belongs not to us, and deprive ourselves of many benefits, which, if duly humbled, we might enjoy.

It cannot be denied that God is the sovereign disposer of all events, and that "the Spirit divided to every man severally as he will."

But shall we therefore imagine that nothing depends on ourselves; that nothing is gained by obedience, or lost by disobedience? "We have not so learned Christ;" nor have we such partial views of his Word.

We believe, that however free and undeserved the gifts of God are, they would come down to us in richer abundance, if we were more earnest in seeking them; and that the true reason of our possessing so little is, that we labor so little to obtain fresh communications, or to improve those we have already received. If we would not enervate, or rather destroy, the force of our text, we must subscribe to this sentiment; for there God expresses his regret that *the obstinacy of his people prevented the descent of his blessings to them*; which is a proof, that though his mercies are in some instances sovereignly and freely dispensed—yet they are not arbitrarily withheld from any; or, in other words, though some are elected to salvation, none are lost through an unmerited sentence of absolute and eternal reprobation.

To enter fully into the spirit of our text, it will be proper to consider,

***~~I. Who it is that here addresses us.~~***

When anything is spoken to us by another person, we involuntarily consider who it is that addresses us, and pay attention to the words in proportion to the wisdom, the goodness, or authority of the speaker. If he is a stranger, we feel a comparative indifference towards him; but if he is a friend, a benefactor, a father, we are more observant of everything he says.

Now God frequently expatiates on his own character, in order that he may arrest our attention, and make a deeper impression on our minds. In the words before us:

***~~1. God describes himself by the relation he bears to his redeemed people.~~***

God was related to Israel in a peculiar manner. He had brought them out of Egypt; and they were the only people that acknowledged him. He was therefore properly "their Redeemer; the Holy One of Israel, their God!"

The Christian Church, as a body, stand in a similar relation to him; and are in that respect distinguished, like the Jews, from all the idolatrous nations of the earth. But there are some to whom in a higher and more appropriate sense, he bears these relations. There are some whom he has actually redeemed from sin and death; in whose hearts he reigns; and on whose behalf he exercises all his adorable perfections. Among this happy number we profess to be.

With what care and diligence then should we attend to the words before us, when we consider them as *addressed to us by Him, who bought us with his own blood, and who has given himself to us as our God and portion forever!*

***~~2. God describes himself by the kindness he exercises towards to his redeemed people.~~***

As God gave unto Israel both the moral and ceremonial law for their instruction, and guided them through the wilderness for forty years, so is he now the instructor and leader of the Christian Church, who exclusively enjoy the light of revelation. But there are a favored few, "a little flock," to whom these blessings are given in a more especial manner.

While multitudes never receive any benefit from the ministration of the Gospel, some are "taught to profit" by it; they are instructed in the knowledge of their own hearts; and are enabled to discern the suitableness of Christ to their necessities, and to live by faith upon him as their only Savior! [Acts 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14). [1 John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.20). They are also "led in the way that they should go;" they are brought from "the course of this world in which they were walking," and are guided into the way of peace and holiness, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18). [Ephesians 2:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.1-5). [Titus 3:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3-5).

If we have experienced these blessings—then surely we cannot but "give earnest heed to the things" spoken in the text, since they are spoken by Him, to whose gracious and effectual teaching we owe all the knowledge we possess, and to whose protecting care we are indebted for every step that we have taken in the way to Canaan.

Let us listen then with the deepest reverence to the voice of our Benefactor.

***~~II. The regret which God expresses on our account.~~***

In his words we may notice,

***~~1. The matter of His regret.~~***

God is not an unconcerned spectator of our conduct. He is not satisfied with giving us his commands, and leaving us to obey them or not, as we please; he longs to engage our most affectionate regards to him and his service; and, when all his efforts are in vain, he takes up a lamentation over us, as a father over a disobedient and incorrigible child, [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.37) and [Luke 19:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.42).

What abundant occasion has he for regret on our account! He has commanded us:  
to sincerely come to him,  
to live in a state of holy fellowship with him,  
and to delight ourselves in him.

But how deaf are we to his entreaties, and how slow of heart to obey his voice! It is not the ungodly alone over whom he has cause to lament, but even his own people; yes, even they, whose God he is, and whom he has redeemed with his own precious blood; they whom he has instructed by his Word and Spirit, and whom he has led by his providential care! Even they, I say, grieve him by their inattention, and provoke him to displeasure by their neglect; and so is he at times weighed down, as it were, by their misconduct, that he scarcely knows how to bear with them, or how to act towards them! [Amos 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 2.13). [Jeremiah 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.19). [Hosea 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 11.8).

**2. The reason of His regret.**

And what is it that occasions his regret? Would he gain anything by our obedience? Or does he lose anything by our disobedience [Job 22:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 22.2-3). No, he knows how much we lose by our folly; and it grieves him, that, when he is so desirous of loading us with his richest benefits, we should be so regardless of our own interest and happiness.

If we were uniformly zealous and active in the service of our God, "our peace would flow down" in a serene, uninterrupted course, "like a river!" And "our righteousness," or prosperity of soul, would "like the waves of the sea," be exalted, irresistible, and boundless! We would find "the work of righteousness to be peace [Isaiah 32:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.17)." We would have great, [Psalm 119:165](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.165), and abundant [Psalm 72:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.7), peace; and "in keeping God's commandments we would have a rich reward! [Psalm 19:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.11)."

Is there not then cause for regret, that we should be such enemies to our own welfare; and that, instead of enjoying the felicity of God's chosen people, we should scarcely differ, either in comfort or holiness, from the ungodly world around us?

Yes; if angels rejoice over our prosperity, they may well join with their Maker in pathetic lamentations over the greater part of the professing Christian Church.

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. How bitter will be the reflections of the ungodly in the eternal world!~~***

*Now*God laments over them; but they regard him not.

*Then*they will lament over their own state; and he will not regard them.

Then they will adopt the very language of the text, "O that I had hearkened to God's commandments! Then would my peace at this moment have been constant as a river, and boundless as the sea."

I would not have been in this place of torment! I would not have been weeping and wailing and gnashing my teeth in hopeless agony, as I now do.

No; I would have been like those in Abraham's bosom; I would have been holy as God is holy, and happy to the utmost extent of my capacities or desires. O fool that I was! O that I had hearkened to God's commandments! I was warned, but would not believe! I was exhorted, but would not comply! O that it were possible to obtain one more offer of mercy! But, alas! that is a fruitless wish!

Beloved brethren, Why will you not consider these things before it is too late?

***~~2. How blessed may the ungodly yet become, if they will only seek after God!~~***

The words of the text were spoken in reference to the very people who were afterwards carried captive to Babylon; and therefore they may be considered as addressed to every individual among us. God is not willing that any of us should perish, [Ezekiel 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.11). He desires rather that we should come to repentance and live, [2 Peter 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.9). He is as willing to be their Redeemer, and their God, as to be the God of any person in the universe. He would teach and guide them as cheerfully, and as effectually as he taught the Prophets and Apostles of old. "O that they were wise, and would consider these things! They would surely then understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, [Psalm 107:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.43);" they would be filled with "a peace that passes all understanding," and have, both in their purity and joy, a sweet foretaste of their heavenly inheritance!

***~~#949~~***

***~~CHRIST THE LIGHT AND SALVATION OF THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.6)~~***

KJV. "And he said, It is a light thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

NIV. "The Lord says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

That the *Gentiles*were to be received into the Church of God, was a truth which the Jews were backward to admit. Several years after the Gospel had been preached to the Jews, Peter declined visiting the Gentiles, and was afterwards called to an account by the Apostles themselves for going to them, [Acts 11:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 11.1-2). This was six or seven years after Christ's ascension; nor could anything but repeated miracles in their favor overcome the prejudices which he entertained respecting them. Not but that the conversion of the Gentiles had been very frequently and plainly foretold. The very passage before us, if there had been no other, was quite sufficient to raise an expectation of that event.

In the context there is a conversation between Jehovah and his Son. The Messiah announces to the Gentiles his qualifications for the work to which he was called, verse 1-3; but at the same time complains that his labors among the Jews were almost in vain, verse 4. Nevertheless He declares his unshaken confidence that Jehovah would not leave him without ultimate success, verse 4. Jehovah then, in answer to his Son, assures him, that however he may be treated by the Jews, he shall be upheld and accepted in his work, verse 5; and that his failure among the Jewish nation shall be far overbalanced by his success among the Gentiles.

To elucidate this prophecy, we shall consider,

***~~I. The characters here given to Christ.~~***

There can be no doubt but that the words of the text relate to Christ.

They are far too strong to be applied to Isaiah himself; nor could they with propriety be spoken of any but the Messiah. The expressions here used are similar to those which the prophet elsewhere uses in reference to him, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); [Isaiah 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.6); [Isaiah 60:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.3); they were evidently alluded to by the patriarch when he took up the infant Jesus in his arms, [Luke 2:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.30-32), and are expressly quoted by Paul as having received their accomplishment in Christ, [Acts 13:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.46-47).

To him the characters, there specified, most eminently belong. He is "the Restorer of Israel," having reconciled "many myriads" of them to God.

He is also the "**light of the Gentiles**".

Another prophet describes him as "the Sun of Righteousness, [Malachi 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.2)." In the New Testament also he is repeatedly called "the Light of the world, [John 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.4); [John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.9)." Others have enlightened the world by revealing the will of God; but He alone reveals it by his Spirit to the souls of men. He alone, who opened Lydia's heart, can have access to ours, [Acts 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.14). He alone, who opened the understanding of his disciples, can illumine our benighted minds, [Luke 24:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.45); and this he does for those who lie in darkness and the shadow of death.

While his once favored people the Jews are blinded, he takes the veil from our hearts, and guides us into all truth. Thus does he abundantly fulfill to us his gracious promise, [John 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.12).

***~~He is moreover "the salvation of men even to the ends of the world".~~***

Many of the judges and kings of Israel were saviors in a temporal view; but Jesus imparts to his followers a far more glorious salvation. By his own blood he has "obtained an eternal redemption" for them, and by his meritorious obedience he renders them completely righteous. He is not merely a Savior to them, but "salvation" itself. *As he procured—so he imparts, maintains, and perfects the salvation of those who trust in him*. There are none so remote but he extends to them the benefits of his death. "He came to save the lost," in whatever quarter of the globe they are. For this very end was he sent into the world by his heavenly Father; and, as being expressly appointed to this office, he is called God's salvation.

In fulfilling these characters, he displays,

***~~II. The excellence of the dispensation committed to him.~~***

***~~The dispensation of the law to the Jews was glorious.~~***

There was much of the Gospel communicated in and with the Law. The ceremonial rites were altogether "shadows of the good things" which were afterwards to be more fully revealed. The moral law itself, while it condemned the Jews, was intended to promote their salvation; and many, in different ages, were guided to Heaven by the light which was then afforded them. The Mosaic law therefore was a rich blessing to that nation, and the salvation of a remnant from among them clearly manifested the efficacy of the great sacrifice of Christ.

***~~But the dispensation of the Gospel to the whole world is incomparably more glorious.~~***

It brings far greater good to men.

We must not disparage the salvation of one single soul; much less should we undervalue the mercy shown to so many of the Jews; but still, the Jews were a small body, when compared with the Gentile world, and it was but a little remnant, even of them, that obtained mercy. But the publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles has been the means of saving unnumbered myriads. There are people in every quarter of the globe, who experience the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood. Yes, every day and hour are multitudes ascending from the darkest corners of the earth to swell the chorus in Heaven. How much more glorious then is the dispensation which diffuses its blessings so extensively, than that which confined them to such a narrow sphere! Surely it would have been "a light thing to save the Jews" in comparison with such a multitude. We may well therefore apply to this subject those words of the Apostle, "If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! [2 Corinthians 3:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.9-11)."

It brings also far greater glory to the Savior himself.

Had none but Jews been saved by him, he might have appeared partial in his regards, or it might be thought that his sacrifice was but of a limited value. But the extension of mercy to the Gentiles displays "the exceeding riches of his grace," and shows that his death is a sufficient sin-atoning sacrifice. How transcendent is the Redeemer's glory in this view! And how glorious will he appear, when all who he has redeemed from every nation of the earth shall unite in ascribing salvation to him! The saving of a few from one nation only would not have been a suitable recompense for his work. He might well have complained that he had "spent his strength for nothing;" but he will be fully "satisfied with the travail of his soul," because so enlarged will be his Church, that "the birth of her womb will be as the dew of the morning, [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3)."

***~~We shall conclude with a word of two of ADVICE.~~***

***~~1. Welcome the Savior under the characters which are here given him.~~***

We all need him as the light of our minds, and the Savior of our souls!

Let none then boast of the light of reason, or "lean to their own understanding;" nor let us trust in our own goodness to merit, or strength to work out, salvation.

Let us rather look to Jesus for the teaching of his Word and Spirit, and unite our acknowledgments with those of the saints of old, [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24).

Let us rejoice exceedingly that "help is laid upon One so mighty, [Psalm 89:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.19)."

Let us receive him for all the ends for which he is offered to us, "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our *righteousness*, *sanctification*and *redemption*! [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)."

Let none say: I am so far off, I can never hope for salvation by him. His exhortation recorded by the prophet yet sounds in our ears [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22); nor shall any be ashamed who put their trust in him.

**2. Do not attempt to separate his characters, but unite them.**

In vain shall we hope to be *saved*by Christ, if he has not *enlightened*our understandings. Though he gives not to all his people the same degree of knowledge, he invariably instructs them in the most important truths. If we have no Scriptural views:  
of the evil of sin,  
of the wickedness of the heart,  
of the beauty of holiness, and  
of the suitableness of Christ and his salvation  
—then we are still in a lost and perishing condition.

The text itself informs us that Christ becomes our salvation by being our light.

On the other hand, let us not rest in a speculative knowledge of these things. We must manifest the practical and sanctifying effects of what we know. We must be delivered from the love and practice both of open and secret sin. Without this, the clearest perception of divine truths will be of no avail. Let us unite in our experience what is thus united in Christ, and seek to grow as well in gracious affections, as in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior! [2 Peter 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.18).

***~~#950~~***

***~~CHRIST'S FUTURE REIGN~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.7)~~***

KJV. "Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers; kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose you."

NIV. "This is what the LORD says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Of prophecy we may say, that it is by far the most satisfactory evidence which we have of the truth of our holy religion. Yet it is not altogether the number of the things that have been foretold respecting our blessed Lord—no, nor even the minuteness of them, that carries the fullest conviction to our minds; it is the strangeness of them, and the great improbability that such things should ever have combined in our Lord and Savior! This, I say, it is which renders the prophecies so demonstrative of the Messiahship of Jesus.

For suppose that God had determined to send his only dear Son into the world for our redemption, and to inform us beforehand what an appearance he should make in the world, and what a reception he would find—what should we expect to be declared concerning him? Certainly we would expect that God would send him in a way suited to his exalted character; so that by the very splendor of his appearance he would manifest his relation to God, and carry conviction to the minds of all who should behold him. We would expect that his reception should perfectly accord with this. In truth, we could conceive no other, than that, if God should manifest himself in human flesh, and more especially if he would, in proof of his divine mission, work innumerable miracles, which, while they could admit of no doubt, would shadow forth the salvation which he was come to impart—then all of necessity must love him, and acknowledge him as their Lord, and give themselves up to him as his obedient followers. And if the general tenor of prophecy had accorded with these views, and represented him as to be so received, it would have precisely answered the expectations we had formed.

But in proportion as the prophecies corresponded with our previous expectations, they would have been divested of their force. It is *the contrariety of the prophecies to all human expectations that gives them such weight*; for the less the events predicted could be expected by men, the more, provided they were really accomplished, they would show that they had proceeded from God; who alone could know what would really occur, or think of accomplishing his purposes by such extraordinary means.

Now the prophecy before us commends itself to us most highly in this particular view; since its representations of the Messiah are such as no finite intelligence could ever have anticipated; and its statements of events are such as could never have been expected to flow from the mission of such a person into the world.

Let us consider,

***~~I. The representation which is here given of the Messiah.~~***

The words before us are an address of the Father to his own Son, under the character of the Messiah. Behold the description given of him!

**Nothing can be conceived more humiliating.**

It is here predicted, that he should be an object of contempt and abhorrence to his whole nation, and, though in himself the Creator of Heaven and earth, be regarded by the Rulers as the lowest slave.

But can it be of the Messiah that such things are foretold? Yes, of the Messiah himself, who was to be known und distinguished by these very marks; so that, if any person, professing himself to be the appointed Messiah, should not answer to this character, it would be a sufficient proof that he was an impostor. If he is the Messiah indeed, he must be one "whom men despise, and the whole nation abhor," and who, by "the Rulers," is treated as a slave.

***~~This, however, was the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.~~***

Never was a being more despised than he. His whole appearance was contemptible in the eyes of those who looked for a temporal prince; so that he was indeed "a root out of a dry ground, having no form or loveliness; and they who saw him could find no beauty in him, for which he was to be desired, [Isaiah 53:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.2)." In truth, he was as "a worm," and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people! [Psalm 22:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.6)." Nothing was too contemptuous to say of him, nothing too insulting to do unto him. Some said of him, "He is a glutton and a drunkard—a friend of publicans and sinners! [Matthew 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.19)." Others even appealed to himself for the justness of their reproaches, "Don't we say that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil! [John 8:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.48)."

And when they could not deny his miracles, they denounced him as a confederate with Beelzebub, and as acting by a power derived from him, [Matthew 9:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.34). To express their utter contempt of his pretensions as the promised Messiah, they "arrayed him in mock majesty, and spat upon him, and smote him, saying, Tell us who smote you? [Matthew 27:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.29-30). [Luke 22:64](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.64)."

In this "the whole nation" concurred. The Jewish rulers would on no account allow Pilate to release him; the people "with one voice cried out, Crucify him! Crucify him!" and "asked that Barabbas, who was a murderer, should be granted to them in preference to him." Crucifixion was a death to which none but slaves were doomed; but nothing less than that would satisfy the Rulers; who having dragged him before the different tribunals of Pilate, and Herod, and the High Priest, consigned him over, at last, to that death which was regarded as accursed both by God and man! [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13).

***~~And that same character attaches to him at this very hour.~~***

I need not say how his name is cast out both by Jews and Gentiles. I will speak of him rather as he still appears even in the professing Christian world. I grant that nominally he is regarded with great veneration and respect; but really he is treated, and that too even by his professed followers, just as he was in the days of old.

What is there in his religionthat conciliates the regards of men? It is at this very hour, no less than in former ages, to self-righteous pharisees "a stumbling-block," and to those who are wise in their own conceit "foolishness! [1 Corinthians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.23)." To stand indebted wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength, and to give the whole glory of our salvation to him alone, is thought as absurd in this day, as it was, in the Apostle's days. To look for salvation to one who saved not himself, but was crucified as a malefactor, is considered foolishness. In like manner to devote oneself entirely to him, and to live altogether to his glory, is deemed a ridiculous excess at this day, just as much as it was in the days of old.

Does anyone doubt this? Look then at any person who preaches fully and faithfully the cross of Christ; and say whether his doctrine is not as despised as in days of old? Or look at anyone that truly follows Christ, and see whether there is not, as arising out of that very circumstance, a good measure of contempt and ridicule cast upon him by his friends and relatives. See whether "the offence of the cross have ceased! [Galatians 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.11)." See whether Christ is not still hated and persecuted in his members, just as he was in his own person, though not altogether with the same malignity. Yes truly, his obedient followers are still regarded as "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things! [1 Corinthians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.13)." And if they be not treated as in former days, it is not owing to any change that has taken place in the hearts of their enemies, but to the protection afforded by the laws where Christianity is the religion of the land.

Now this I consider as an evidence in favor of the Gospel which we preach. If our doctrine und its professors were generally approved by the world, it would give very just ground to suspect that our opinions were not those of the Apostles; since our blessed Lord foretold that his disciples would "be hated of all men for his name's sake, [Matthew 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.22);" and Paul also has declared that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution! [2 Timothy 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.12)." But our blessed Savior was treated as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold; and, both in his doctrineand in his members—he is still treated precisely as he and his inspired Apostles have given us reason to expect.

We are not however discouraged; nor need we be, if we consider,

***~~II. The determination of God respecting him.~~***

**God has decreed that all mankind shall bow to the scepter of his Son.**

Kings and princes, however great in the eyes of men, are as much under the control of God as the lowest of the human race; and in God's good time they shall all, even all throughout the whole world, submit themselves to him, "they shall see, and arise, and bow down him!" Yes truly, dishonored as the Lord Jesus Christ has been, and despised as he still is, and especially among the great and mighty, "he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high;" and "kings," being brought to a just consideration of his character, "shall shut their mouths" with the profoundest reverence, [Isaiah 52:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.13); [Isaiah 52:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.15).

Nor shall he be thus regarded only by his ancient people the Jews; the remotest monarchs of the earth shall honor him, "the kings of Tarshish and of the islands shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yes, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him! [Psalm 72:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.10-11)."

***~~For this he pledges both the veracity of his Word and the immutability of his counsels.~~***

"All princes shall worship him, because of the Lord who is faithful." Jehovah has not only said, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion, [Psalm 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.6);" but he has confirmed his Word with an oath, saying, "I have sworn by myself, the Word has gone forth out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear, [Isaiah 45:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.23)."

Now this Word is not gone forth in vain. It began, in some small degree, to be accomplished even in the apostolic age; and still more when Christianity was embraced by the head of the Roman Empire.

But a mere *nominal subjection*to him, such as is now professed among the princes of Christendom, is not that allegiance of which my text speaks. No, there shall be a willing and unreserved subjection to him among all the kings of the earth, and all the kingdoms of the world shall become his undisputed empire! [Revelation 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15).

It has been promised to the Messiah himself, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for your possession! [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)." It has been promised also to the Church of God, "Kings shall be your nursing-fathers, and Queens your nursing-mothers; they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet, verse 23." And "has God spoken thus—and will he not make it good?"

"His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure! [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.10)." And who shall change his purpose, or obstruct the execution of his will? In the covenant he entered into with his own Son, he engaged, that, "though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors! [Isaiah 53:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10-12)."

And we may be perfectly assured, that this stone, however disallowed by the professed builders of the Church "shall become the chief corner-stone, [1 Peter 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.6-7)." Yes, "this stone, cut out without hands, shall break in pieces all the kingdoms of the world, and establish one undivided empire over the face of the whole earth! [Daniel 2:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.34-35); [Daniel 2:44-45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.44-45)."

***~~Behold then,~~***

***~~1. What a glorious period is fast approaching!~~***

Assuredly, what is here foretold shall be fulfilled in its season. Was Jesus, "after all his humiliation" unto death, exalted above all the principalities and powers of Heaven, earth, and Hell? [Philippians 2:6-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.6-11); and shall not all that has been predicted concerning him be fulfilled? Yes, "He shall be king over all the earth; there shall be but one Lord, and his name one! [Zechariah 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.9)." And if any refuse to bow to the scepter of his grace, "they shall be broken in pieces, as a potter's vessel, [Psalm 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.9)."

Contemplate then this day, when all, without exception, "shall be righteous, [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21);" when "holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses;" and when "there shall no more be found a Canaanite in the land, [Zechariah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.20-21)."

Did Abraham, at the distance of two thousand years, rejoice at his glimmering prospect of the Redeemer's first coming, [John 8:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.56); and shall not we rejoice in the glorious consummation which is now so fast approaching? Surely the heavens and the earth should rejoice, yes, the "hills should break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field should clap their hands," at the prospect which we now enjoy of a speedy and universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth, verse 13 with [Psalm 98:4-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 98.4-9).

***~~2. What encouragement have those who minister in holy things!~~***

The Prophets and Apostles had much to contend with, in their day; and some of them saw, at the time, but little fruit of their labor. But would one among them think either his labors or his sufferings too great, if he could now see what exists upon the face of the earth, among the saints of God? How much less, then, will they grudge their services, when they shall behold the Lord Jesus reigning in his millennial glory; and still less, when they shall see the full and entire fruit of their labors in the heavenly world!

Let those, then, who engage in the service of their Lord, whether in the contracted circle of a single parish, or in the more enlarged sphere of a mission to the heathen, contemplate the benefit which may be hoped to arise from their labors; and that, not at the first moment of their exertions, but at a more remote period, when perhaps a "little one, whom they shall have begotten to the Lord, shall have become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation! [Isaiah 60:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.22).

Let every one that is engaged in this blessed work gladly "do all things, and suffer all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory! [2 Timothy 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.10)." And if only they are permitted to sow the seed, let them remember, that the day is coming, "when they who sowed, and they who reaped, shall rejoice together! [John 4:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.36)."

***~~3. How happy are those who truly believe in Christ!~~***

The same things has God decreed respecting you, as concerning his dear Son; and on the same grounds does he assure them to you. *Like the Savior himself, you shall be hated and despised of men; but, like him, you shall triumph over all your enemies, and be exalted to thrones of glory!* [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21). Even "Satan himself," with all the principalities and powers of Hell, "shall be bruised under your feet shortly, [Romans 16:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.20)."

Know that "God has chosen you to salvation, [2 Thessalonians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13)," and "promised you eternal life, [Titus 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.2). 1 [John 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 2.25)." And who shall set aside his purpose? Who shall make his promises of no effect?

Look forward, then, to the outcome of your present conflicts. Let it be a light matter in your eyes to be an object of scorn and derision to ungodly men; (rather rejoice that you are permitted so to resemble your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! [1 Peter 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.13);) and look forward to the same blessed recompense as he himself received. "He, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down on the right hand of the throne of God, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)." Assuredly, if you are conformed to him in sufferings, you shall also be conformed to him in glory; for "if you suffer with him, you shall, as sure as God is true, reign with him also in glory forever and ever! [2 Timothy 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.11-12)."

***~~#951~~***

***~~THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST'S SALVATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.8-10)~~***

KJV. "Thus says the Lord; In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will preserve you, and give you for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that you may say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he who has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them."

NIV. "This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you; I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people, to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances, to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!' "They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill. They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water!"

To the Messiah God had promised, that, after his inconceivable degradation, he should be exalted, insomuch that the Kings and princes of the earth should bow down and worship at his footstool, verse 7. In the passage before us, the same idea is amplified and enlarged. Jehovah had said to him, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)."

And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are informed, that "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears; and was heard, [Hebrews 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.7)." While he prayed for himself, he interceded also for all his people, to the very end of time, [John 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.9); [John 17:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.20); [John 17:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.24). For them also was he heard; as we are told in the words which I have just read, "In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you; and I will give you for a covenant of the people, that you may cause them to inherit the desolate heritages."

In these words, together with those which follow them, we may see,

***~~I. The promised diffusion of the Gospel.~~***

To enter properly into the meaning of the passage, we must bear in mind the redemption from Babylon, to which there is a manifest reference. Not that the redemption from Babylon is here predicted; that has been very fully and largely spoken of by the prophet in the foregoing parts of his prophecy. He soars far above that subject in this place; and speaks of the redemption of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, though in terms applicable to the other event.

The whole of Judea was desolated by the Chaldean invaders; and, on the proclamation of Cyrus, the people were permitted to resume their former inheritances, and to repair the desolations throughout the land.

In like manner, the whole world, which has been desolated by sin and Satan, is here spoken of as to be repaired by the Lord Jesus Christ, at the period foretold in prophecy, even at "the accepted time."

***~~1. This was begun in the apostolic age.~~***

The Lord Jesus Christ, after all his sufferings and death, was raised from the dead; and, after all the efforts made by men and devils to suppress his rising cause, "was preserved;" yes, and was "made a covenant-head to all the people of the world;" that, by believing in Him, they might regain all that they had lost in the first Adam, and all of which sin and Satan had despoiled them.

Holiness was the possession, and Heaven the heritage of man, while he retained his innocence; but he lost them; and must be restored to them by the Lord Jesus Christ; and, through the preaching of the Apostles, multitudes, not of Jews only, but of heathens also, were restored. Those who were bound, as it were, in chains, and immured in dungeons, were liberated by the Lord Jesus Christ; and they came forth, even as Lazarus had done, at his bidding, and became visible and living monuments of his power and grace. "Being made free by him, they became free indeed, [John 8:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.36)."

Hence Paul expressly referring to the prophecy in my text, declared that the period spoken of was then arrived, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." But,

***~~2. It is still existing at this present moment.~~***

To this hour, in despite of all the powers of darkness, yes, and of the weakness and wickedness of man, are the interests of Christ and his Church still "preserved." Thousands yet look to him as their Covenant-head, and receive through him all the blessings of salvation. Blessed be God! We yet see, I trust, in the midst of you, those who "have been begotten again to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, [1 Peter 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.3-4);" and who, by the Word and Spirit of God, are "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18)." I declare that this is the accepted time, as truly as that was in the apostolic age; and that "no one, who will come to Christ, shall ever be rejected, [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37)." "To you, Beloved, is the Word of this salvation sent;" and without hesitation I declare unto you, that "all who will believe in Christ shall be justified from all things! [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.39)."

***~~3. It will be completely and fully arrived in the Millennium.~~***

However low the cause of Christ may sink (and it has sunk very low at different periods since its first promulgation), it shall be "preserved," yes, and shall be "established" too, over the face of the whole earth. There is not in the universe a people, however ignorant or enslaved in sin, who shall not be "brought forth into the marvelous light of his Gospel" by faith in Christ. Jews and Gentiles shall alike partake of his blessings. For all, beholding Christ as their Covenant-head and Surety, shall obtain a saving interest in the covenant which he has ratified, even in the covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure." A blessed day will that be! Methinks the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain for its arrival. The deliverance from Babylon was but a very faint emblem of that day; for from Babylon a small remnant only returned to possess their former inheritance; but, at the period of which we are speaking, a redeemed world "shall come with singing unto Zion," and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God!"

In connection with the spread of the Gospel, the prophet proceeds to state,

***~~II. The felicity of those who shall embrace the Gospel.~~***

Here, the reference to the redemption from *Egypt*, which had long since taken place, and that from *Babylon*, which was yet future—must be more distinctly noticed. Both the one and the other of those far exceeded all that could have been expected, and all that could have been supposed within the verge of possibility. The obstructions to that from Egypt, especially, appeared utterly insurmountable. For, how should such a multitude be fed? How should they be screened from the heat, which, at seasons, must be too oppressive to be borne? How should they also be conducted through a wilderness which was utterly unexplored? And how should they find refreshment in a land where there were neither rivers nor springs? These difficulties had been overcome through the good providence of God; and whatever may be supposed to correspond with them in the spiritual life shall also be vanquished by all who commit themselves to Christ as "their Leader," whom they will follow, and "their Commander," whom they will obey, [Isaiah 55:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.4).

He here assures to his people:

***~~1. Provision.~~***

He who gave his people bread from Heaven for the space of forty years will be at no loss to "feed" his flocks, however numerous, in this dreary wilderness; or to give them ample "pasturage," even on the summit of the most barren "mountains."

In the same way, "A feast of fat things has he provided for us, [Isaiah 25:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.6). Yes, and he has "spread a table for us in the presence of our enemies [Psalm 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.5)." "The meek therefore may rest assured that they shall eat and be satisfied, [Psalm 22:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.26);" "their souls shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, [Psalm 63:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.5);" and in the strength of the divine communications they shall be enabled to go forward, finding no labor too arduous, no difficulty too great, for them to surmount, [1 Kings 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.7).

**2. Protection.**

One of the greatest obstacles to the progress of unprotected travelers is the intense heat of the sun, which frequently destroys those who are exposed to its fiery rays. But to his people, when assaulted by persecution or temptation, Christ himself will be a shelter, even "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! [Isaiah 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.2)." "Neither heat nor sun shall smite them." True it is, that, in the apostolic age, myriads were persecuted even unto death; and even at the present time there are but few followers of Christ who have not a cross to bear; but still is this prophecy fulfilled; because, if *afflictions*abound, our *consolations*much more abound; and, instead of feeling the rays of the sun intolerable, we are enabled to "glory in tribulation," and to "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer either shame or death for Christ's sake! [Romans 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.3). [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.41); [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24)."

***~~3. Guidance.~~***

The cloud, which covered the camp of Israel from the action of the solar rays, was a pillar of fire to light them by night, and went before them in all their journeys.

In the same way, our blessed Lord will lead his people now, and make their way plain before their face. His word shall mark their path; his Spirit shall shine upon it; his providence shall open it from time to time; and thus "he will guide them by his counsel, until at last he receives them to glory! [Psalm 73:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 73.24)."

***~~4. Refreshment.~~***

To God's people in the wilderness the fatigues of traveling were great, notwithstanding all the advantages they enjoyed; insomuch, that they were greatly discouraged by reason of the hardness of the way.

In the same way, through the weakness of human nature, we shall often be ready to faint in our heavenly journey. But God will "lead us by springs of water," where we can at all times quench our thirst, and refresh our weary souls. Our blessed Lord promises that we shall have his Spirit within us, as "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! [John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.14); [John 7:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-38)."

But in this last communication, methinks I see, us it were, a Heaven upon earth; for the description given us of Heaven itself is conveyed in the very words of my text, "They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes! [Revelation 7:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.15-17)."

Such was the blessed state of the Church in the apostolic age.

And such it is at this very hour.

And such, only in a far more exalted degree, shall it be in the day when Christ shall take to him his great power, and reign unto the ends of the earth.

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

And now, let me ask: Who among you does not need this salvation? Who among you, if not already liberated by divine grace, is not at this hour in bondage to sin and Satan, death and Hell? But I am happy to declare, that "now is an accepted time, and a day of salvation," to all who will "lay hold on the covenant" of grace, and embrace Christ as he is offered in the Gospel!

And why should it not be an accepted time to *you*, my brethren, as well as unto God? Is there any other time better than the present? And are not the advantages which are here proposed to you sufficient for your encouragement? Is it a light matter to be emancipated from your thraldom, and to be brought forth into light and liberty? Is it a small matter to have every thins provided for your journey, and eternal glory at the end? What would you have more in this dreary wilderness, than God has here promised you? What if I should proceed to open to you:  
the richness of the provision,  
the strength of the protection,  
the certainty of the guidance,  
the sweetness of the refreshment,  
especially if we view in it, as we may, the glory and felicity of Heaven?

But I trust that more is not necessary. "This is the heritage of all the servants of the Lord." Let it be yours. Beg of God that you may be begotten to it; and become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Never forget that Christ has purchased it for you; and offers it to you, as freely as ever he did redemption from Egypt, or from Babylon, to his ancient people. I pray God that not one among you may fall short of this inheritance; but that all of you may possess it, by *faith*in this present world, and by actual *fruition*in the world to come!

***~~#952~~***

***~~GOD WILL NOT FORGET HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14-16)~~***

KJV. "But Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget; yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

NIV. "But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me!"

*Were the glorious truths of Christianity allowed their due operation on the hearts of men, this world would be a scene of universal peace and happiness!* "The heavens and the earth, the mountains," and the valleys would form one harmonious concert, all singing aloud for joy at the glad tidings of redemption through the sufferings of our incarnate God. But the great mass of mankind disregard the gospel as "a cunningly devised fable;" while multitudes who profess to believe them, derive no comfort from them, by reason of the corrupt state of their own minds, and the hard thoughts which they entertain of God.

In the verse preceding our text, we see what reason there is for joy. But in the text itself we are told, how lamentably the proper influence of the Gospel is counteracted by the mistakes and errors of God's professing people, which yet he is endeavoring by all possible means to rectify.

***~~I. We here behold the Jew's complaint against God.~~***

The complaint, in its primary sense, may be understood as uttered by the Church in Babylon, where her state was indeed most disconsolate. Moreover, in the present dispersion of her members, which has now continued so many hundred years, we may find a further ground for the complaint, that she is forsaken and forgotten by her God. Paul, aware that there was in appearance some reason for such an apprehension, states the question, "Has God cast off his people?" and then, by an appeal to fact, he establishes the truth which is asserted in our text, in opposition to it, [Romans 11:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.1-5).

But it is in reference to *individuals*, and not to the Church at large, that we shall consider the complaint. It is common for people under the Christian dispensation to adopt the language of our text. We will therefore state:

***~~1. The occasions that most generally give birth to it.~~***

Among the various causes of such a desponding apprehension, the first to be noticed is a long continuance of some temporal affliction. As little as we think of God in a state of prosperity, and as little as we are inclined to mark his hand in the earlier stages of adversity—when we have long been oppressed with trials, our mind almost of necessity reverts to him as the author of them; and that too, not in a way of meek submission, but in a way of murmuring and discontent.

Thus did the Church in David's days; she complained that God had cast her off, [Psalm 44:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.9); and adduced all her trials as proofs of her assertion, [Psalm 44:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.10-14); [Psalm 44:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.22); and then, as though God were asleep, and had altogether forgotten her affliction, she entreats him to "awake, and arise" for her relief, [Psalm 44:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.23-26).

Thus also did Job, though on the whole a perfect man, sink at last under his troubles, and become the accuser of his God, [Job 3:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 3.23-24); [Job 6:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 6.2-4). And perhaps, if we inquired diligently into the first causes of despondency, we would generally find that *it has originated in temporal afflictions, which have put the soul off its balance, and disposed it to entertain hard thoughts of God*.

Another occasion of such apprehension is, a long continuance of guilt upon the conscience. After we are sensible that we have sinned, we are frequently a long time before we can humble ourselves before God as we ought to do; and while that hardness of heart continues, it is impossible but that we must be harassed with much disquietude. Thus it was with David, after his sin in the matter of Uriah, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; (for day and night your hand was heavy upon me,) my moisture is turned into the draught of summer [Psalm 32:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 32.3-4)." That "iniquities will separate between us and our God, and cause him to hide his face from us," is certain, [Isaiah 59:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.2); but we are not therefore to conclude, that he has forsaken and forgotten us; since, however he may "speak against us," as with the voice of an enemy, "he does earnestly remember us still. Yes, his affections are troubled for us," until, by our humiliation and contrition, we open a way for him to exercise, consistently with his own honor, his tender mercy towards us, [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20). Nevertheless, until that reconciliation takes place, the distress of a soul that dreads his displeasure must be great indeed, [Psalm 31:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 31.9-10).

One more occasion of such apprehensions is, a lack of answers to prayer. When God is following us with invitations to accept of mercy, we think nothing of months or years. But, if he delays an answer to our supplications, a few days or weeks appear as an age; and we begin to conclude, that he will never grant us any answer at all. Perhaps, of all reasons for despondency, this is the most justifiable; because God has so often promised to hear and answer the prayers of his people; and from hence we may account for those sad complaints, which David, the man after God's own heart, uttered against his God, [Psalm 88:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.1-7); [Psalm 88:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.9); [Psalm 88:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 88.13-16). Doubtless it is distressing to be constrained to say, "I cry in the day time, and you hear not; and in the night season, und am not silent;" but the proper reflection for the soul in such cases is, "You nevertheless continue holy, O you who inhabits the praises of Israel! [Psalm 22:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.3-4)."

***~~2. The dispositions and principles from which it springs.~~***

Whatever be the occasion of desponding apprehensions, they always arise from a morbid state of mind; for, if we were in a right frame, we should, under all circumstances, say with Job, "Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him! [Job 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 13.15)."

At the root of all despondency will be found IMPATIENCE.

We do not like to wait God's time; we would "walk by sight, rather than by faith;" and, if we have not immediately what we desire, we are ready to ask, "Is the Lord among us, or not? [Exodus 17:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 17.7)."

We have a surprising exhibition of this spirit among the more religious part of the Jews in the time of the Prophet Jeremiah. God had denounced his judgments against the whole nation; and had refused to hear any prayers that should be offered for them, [Jeremiah 14:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 14.10-11). Upon this they complain, "Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed? We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there is only terror. O LORD, we acknowledge our wickedness and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you. For the sake of your name do not despise us; do not dishonor your glorious throne. Remember your covenant with us and do not break it! [Jeremiah 14:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 14.19-21)."

Now, after every allowance which must be made for the condescension of God in permitting his people to plead with him, we cannot but think that the terms here used savor of impatience; and that a more respectful and reverential language would have better comported with their state. But strong feelings usually issue in hasty and unadvised expressions.

Another source from which these apprehensions spring, is UNBELIEF.

The promises of God are as clear as the powers of language can express; but we know not how to believe them.

Sometimes they appear too good to be true;  
at other times we doubt whether they are made to us;  
and at other times we are ready to think that they cannot be fulfilled.

Yes, the very providence of God seems to oppose their accomplishment. Hence we listen to the dictates of sense, and, because of our present distress, conclude that God has forsaken and forgotten us. This was the unhappy experience of David himself, who was brought by his trouble to ask,

"Will the Lord cast off forever?  
 Will he be favorable no more?  
 Is his mercy clean gone forever?  
 Does his promise fail for evermore?  
 Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
 Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? [Psalm 77:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-9)."

Well might he add, "This was my infirmity, [Psalm 77:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.10)"—for a dreadful infirmity it was, to entertain such distressing apprehensions for himself, and such base thoughts of God. Yet thus it is, that, under the influence of unbelief, multitudes are yet daily dishonoring their God.

But we must not omit to mention that these apprehensions frequently proceed also from DISEASE OF BODY OR MIND. There is a nervous habit of body that is very apt to produce the feelings we are now speaking of; and, the mind partaking of the weakness of the body, Satan takes advantage of it, to impress on the imagination everything that is gloomy and melancholy:

'God has not elected me;  
I am given over to a reprobate mind;  
I have sinned away my day of grace;  
I have committed the unpardonable sin;  
it is in vain for me to pray, for my doom is sealed;  
God has entirely forsaken me, and, as to any purposes of his grace, has eternally forgotten me!'

This is indeed a most distressing state of mind; and the more so, because the people so affected have not the least conception from whence all their distresses arise. Their apprehensions about God have the same effect on them as if they were founded in truth. *It often happens, that a man's whole life is embittered by fears, which the restoration of bodily health would remove at once.*

It seems probable that David, whose experience, under all the diversified circumstances of his life, is so fully recorded in the Psalms, had somewhat of this trial also; for, under the united pressure of bodily and mental disease, he doubted whether he would ever be restored to a sense of the Divine favor, [Psalm 6:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 6.1-7). But, at all events, it is desirable that they who have to deal with troubled consciences, should be aware that this apparently religious depression is often little more than a bodily disorder; and that they should in many such cases recommend a *physician*for the body, as the most likely means of curing, what, to an ignorant observer, would appear a disease of the soul!

From hearing Zion's complaint against God, let us turn our attention to,

***~~II. The consolatory reply of God to his people.~~***

God desiring that his people should be filled with "strong consolation," has given them such assurance of his care and love, as shall be abundantly sufficient to dissipate all their fears, if only they rely on his Word. That no part of his address to them may escape our notice, let us consider,

***~~1. The assurance which God gives them.~~***

Let the Church's complaint be borne in mind; because to that his answer is immediately directed. She had said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me!" To this he answers, "I will not forget you;" or, as it is most tenderly expressed in another part, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten by me! [Isaiah 44:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.21)." Assertions to the same effect occur in numberless other passages of Scripture, and under a variety of forms 1 Samuel 12:22. [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.5-6). [Malachi 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 2.16). [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29).

But nowhere is it made with greater force than in the passage before us. He appeals to us respecting the care of earthly parents over their offspring.

A father is represented as full of pity towards his suffering child, [Psalm 103:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.13), and as sparing with affectionate regard his duteous son, [Malachi 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.17). It is even taken for granted, that a parent cannot disregard, and much less mock, the necessities of his child, "giving him a stone when he asks for bread, or a scorpion, when he desires an egg, [Matthew 7:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.9-11)."

And, if a father cannot act thus, how much less can a motherturn her back upon her nursing infant, and forget to administer to its necessities, when even her bodily feelings, no less than the tender emotions of her mind, must interest her deeply in supplying its wants. Rare as are instances of a mother being entirely destitute of natural affection, some have been found who, through shame, have murdered their own offspring, and, through the pressure of famine, have even devoured them. It was foretold that such instances would occur, [Leviticus 26:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.29); and we know that they did occur at different times, [2 Kings 6:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 6.28-29), [Lamentations 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 4.10).

But, says God, though there may be found, not only one but many such unnatural mothers, no such forgetfulness of my children shall ever be found in me; I will never forget my Church at large, nor any individual of it in particular.

As for my Church at large, "I will keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it. I will keep it day and night! [Isaiah 27:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.3)."

As for the weakest individuals that are found in it, I will consider them as infants with whom I have travailed in birth; and will carry them in my bosom, until time and age have worn away their strength, and covered their heads with hoary locks! "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you! [Isaiah 46:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.3-4)."

Both collectively and individually, "My eye shall be upon them from one end of the year unto the other end of the year! [Deuteronomy 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 11.12)." Not only shall "their place of defense be the munitions of rocks, but bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure! [Isaiah 33:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.16)."

***~~2. God's confirmation of it.~~***

To confirm his assertion the more strongly, he introduces two striking and well-known illustrations.

The first is taken from a custom which prevailed among the Jews, of imprinting on their flesh, by punctures or by staining, an image of the temple, in order at all times to bring it to their remembrance.

'Now,' says God, 'I have you, and all my children, imprinted thus upon my heart, and on my arms! [Song of Solomon 8:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 8.6). I have set you there as a seal, which shall operate at all times to remind me of you, and to interest me in your favor; yes, "I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;" so that I can never open my hand to dispense blessings to any of my creatures, but I must instantly behold your name, and be stirred up to supply your every need!' What a beautiful and encouraging representation is this!

Nor is the other illustration at all less comforting to the mind. It refers to an architect, who, while he is only just beginning to lay the foundation, has a perfect idea of the whole building in his mind, and sees it there as plainly as if it were already complete. Thus does God even now behold the entire building of his Church complete in all its parts, not a stone lacking, or out of the place ordained for it. Yes, *he sees also every individual stone formed and fashioned according to his sovereign will, and fitted perfectly for the situation which in his eternal counsels he has appointed it to fill.*To a common eye all may appear at present a scene of confusion; but to him who sees all from the beginning, all is in perfect order as far as it has advanced; and the whole edifice is, as it were, already prepared as a fit habitation for the God of Heaven! [Ephesians 2:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.20-22).

Say then, whether there is any ground for the complaint which we have been considering?

Can God have *forsaken*his people, when he is ever present with them?

Can he have *forgotten*them, when he is incessantly carrying on his work in their hearts?

He may, it is true, for wise and gracious purposes, so veil himself, that they shall not immediately behold him; but he can no more forget his redeemed people, than he can forget the interests of his beloved Son, or the honor of his own perfections. This he has stated in the fullest manner, for the comfort of his people, [Isaiah 54:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.7-10); [Isaiah 54:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.17); and, whether we believe it or not, he will accomplish every jot and tittle of it in its season. As he has no inducement to falsify his Word, so he will not, "he cannot, deny himself, [2 Timothy 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.13)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who have forsaken and forgotten God.~~***

Hear the complaint which God utters, "Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number! [Jeremiah 2:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.32)." Alas! how true is this of multitudes among ourselves! Though "He is the fountain of living waters—yet have we forsaken him, and hewn out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water [Jeremiah 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.13)." We have even labored to blot out the remembrance of him from our minds; and so thoroughly have we succeeded in this impious attempt, that, as the Searcher of hearts himself testifies, "God is not in all our thoughts! [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 10.4)." Every vanity has been harbored in our minds; but we have found there no room for God; in short, we have lived "without God in the world, [Ephesians 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12)." What astonishing wickedness is this, that when God has been following us with invitations and entreaties all our days, saying to us, "Turn! Turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" We have "refused to hearken, and stopped our ears, that we could not hear, [Zechariah 7:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 7.11)."

This however cannot always continue. God "will not always strive with us" in this manner; the time is coming when he will requite us according to our deeds, and turn a deaf ear to all our entreaties, [Proverbs 1:24-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.24-31). O that we may be wise in time, and improve aright "this day of our salvation. Compare verse 8 with [2 Corinthians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.2)."

***~~2. Those who think they are forsaken and forgotten by God.~~***

This may be the state even of the best of men; for David, and even the Messiah himself, in a season of dereliction, cried, "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me! [Psalm 22:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.1)." Nevertheless, for the most part, *the hidings of God's face may be traced to some special cause—some inward lust unmortified, or some willful neglect indulged*. Search out then, and put away, whatever is displeasing to your God. But, if you cannot find any particular reason for the dispensation, then follow that advice of the prophet, "Who among you that fears the Lord—and yet walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God! [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10)." Let him plead with God, as David did, and sum up his petitions with that bold request, "Arise, O God, and plead your own cause, [Psalm 74:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 74.19-22)." We may be sure that "God will not contend with us forever, because he knows that our spirits would fail before him, [Isaiah 57:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.16)."

Even where we have been willfully rebellious, he gives us reason to hope, that, for his own sake—he will heal our wounds, and speak comfortably to our souls! [Isaiah 57:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.17-18) and [Hosea 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.14). If we humble ourselves before him, then are we sure that in due season he will lift us up! [James 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.10).

Let every one then, however disconsolate he may be at the present moment, yes though Heaven, earth, and Hell should seem conspiring to destroy him, [Psalm 42:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.7)—check his unbelieving fears, and say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God! [Psalm 42:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.11)."

***~~#953~~***

***~~PROMISED INCREASE OF THE CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:18-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.18-23)~~***

KJV. "Lift up your eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, You shall surely clothe you with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on you as a bride does. For your waste and your desolate places, and the land of your destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants; and they that swallowed you up shall be far away. The children which you shalt have, after you have lost the other, shall say again in your ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to we that I may dwell. Then shall you my in your heart, Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be your nursing-fathers, and their queens your nursing-mothers; they shall bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet; and you shall know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

NIV. "Lift up your eyes and look around; all your sons gather and come to you. As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "you will wear them all as ornaments; you will put them on, like a bride. "Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste, now you will be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away. The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.' Then you will say in your heart, 'Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where have they come from?'" This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed."

To consider *past*events, and especially those recorded in the Holy Scriptures, is obviously the duty of every man; since from them we learn the true character of God, and know what we are to expect at his hands.

Nor are *present*things to occupy a small portion of our regard; for, though we cannot judge of them with certainty, or declare what their ultimate issue will be, we behold them stamped with a visible impression of Divine wisdom and goodness; the very chastisements of Heaven, if viewed aright, convey to us the idea of parental love.

But we have a further duty, which is, to look into *futurity*, and to read in the page of prophecy the events that are yet future. We are not indeed to expect that we ourselves shall be enabled to prophesy, or to obtain such an insight into futurity as to discover the times and the seasons which God has reserved in his own hands; but there are certain great events which shall assuredly come to pass, and which it is our privilege to look forward to, as the pious Jews waited for the coming of their Lord, and looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Indeed it is for this end that the prophecies are given us; namely, that *having expected the completion of them, we should acknowledge God in the events whereby they are completed*.

In the passage before us, there is a prophecy relating to the future state of the Church; in discoursing upon which we shall notice:

***~~I. The promised increase of the Church.~~***

In the verse preceding our text, the substance of the promise is contained, and in our text itself, its accomplishment is represented as actually begun.

In two respects is the Church to be increased:

**1. In number.**

To enter fully into the spirit of this prophecy, we should call to mind the state of Israel in Palestine. The land of Canaan was but a small tract of country, when compared with the numbers that were to inhabit it; so that some of the tribes, particularly Dan, and Ephraim, and Manasseh, complained of the smallness of their lot, [Joshua 17:14-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 17.14-18); [Joshua 19:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 19.47). But, after the desolations occasioned by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the population was so reduced, that they were quite insufficient to inhabit the cities, or to cultivate the ground, [2 Kings 24:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 24.14). Imagine now the people all on a sudden restored to their country, and multiplied far beyond all former precedent; what surprise would be excited, and what universal clamor for lack of room!

Such is the change which is here predicted in relation to the Church; the numbers that shall be added to it will surpass all human expectation, so that "space shall not even be found for them, [Zechariah 10:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 10.10)." In every country, in every city, in every village, yes in every congregation also, shall converts spring up as the piles of grass in the earth, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16), and "shall say in the ears of the Church: The place is too strait for me; give place for me that I may dwell."

The Church herself shall be filled with utter amazement at the multitudes that flock to her; and shall say in her heart, "Who has begotten these for me, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"

Incredible as this may appear, the prophet not only foretells it, but speaks of it as at that moment taking place before his eyes; and of God himself, as swearing that the whole multitude shall become brighter ornaments to the Church, than the richest jewels to a bride, verse 18.

**2. In honor.**

It is not the poor only that shall devote themselves to God in that day, but the rich also. *Hitherto*"not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble have been called, [1 Corinthians 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26);" but *then*it shall not be so; for all the great and mighty of the earth "shall bring their sons in their arms, and their daughters (in litters) upon their shoulders; and kings shall be the nursing-fathers of the Church, and queens her nursing-mothers." As for the *enemies*of the Church, they shall all be prostrate before her, and "lick up the very dust of her feet;" and God shall be as manifestly revealed among them as ever he was in the days of old, verse 23.

Is it asked, How shall this great change be effected? We answer, "God will lift up his hand to the Gentiles, and set up his standard to the people;" he will cause the standard of the cross to be erected in every place, and by the influence of his Spirit will reveal his Son in the hearts of men, "making them willing in the day of his power," and rendering "his Gospel the power of God to the salvation of their souls."

Perhaps in this passage there is a more immediate and explicit declaration of the way in which God's ancient people the Jews shall be converted to the faith. We have reason from Paul to think, that an extraordinary conversion of the Gentiles shall precede the restoration of the Jews, [Romans 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25-26); and here, it should seem, that God will make the efforts of those Gentiles instrumental to the conversion of his once-favored people, "I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters on their shoulders." Surely this thought should animate us to diffuse as far as possible the knowledge of salvation through the heathen world, that the Gentiles being made partakers of this grace, the Jews may be provoked to jealousy to seek it for themselves, [Romans 11:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.11-14).

Let us now contemplate,

***~~II. The encouragement it affords us for Missionary exertions.~~***

Is such a glorious prospect held forth to us, and shall we be indifferent about it, or entertain a doubt of its being realized in due season? No; we will expect it rather, and by anticipation rejoice in it; for:

***~~1. God is able to effect this great thing.~~***

Were this promised event to be produced by human efforts only, we might well doubt whether it should ever be accomplished. But God has taken the matter into his own hand; and has said "I will do it; I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles." And, if GOD will work, who shall hinder him? It is worthy of remark, that Paul himself grounds his assured expectation of these events on this very consideration of God's almighty power. Speaking of the Jews being again grafted into their own olive-tree, he says, "They, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be engrafted in; for God is able to engraft them in again, [Romans 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.23)." In the very chapter before us also, God mentions his all-powerful interposition as an effectual antidote to all the unbelieving fears of his people.

The Church, doubting almost the possibility of the promised events, asks, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" Can it be hoped, that those who are in bondage to such powerful adversaries, and have even sold themselves, as it were, by their iniquities, should ever be redeemed? Yes, "thus says the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away; and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children, verse 24, 25." Let us expect it then at the hands of God, knowing that "what he has promised, he is able also to perform." *Let difficulties, however great they may appear in themselves, be as nothing in our eyes, because that Omnipotence is engaged to surmount them all; and "nothing can be too hard for the Lord."*

***~~2. God has moreover actually engaged to effect it.~~***

Survey the promise in our text, confirmed by a most solemn oath, and therefore "confirmed by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have the stronger consolation." Compare with it many other passages of Holy Writ, which speak decidedly to the same effect, [Isaiah 54:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.1-3); [Isaiah 61:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.4-6); [Isaiah 66:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.18-20). Shall all these fail of their accomplishment? Surely "God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should repent."

As to "the times and the seasons, he has reserved them in his own power. "He cannot deny himself;" and he has himself assured us, in reference to this very thing, that "his gifts and calling are without repentance, [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29)."

***~~3. The beginnings of it are already visible before our eyes.~~***

What the prophet says by anticipation, we may almost speak literally, "Lift up your eyes round about, and behold; all these gather themselves together, and come to you." Since the apostolic age, there has been no period like the present; all nations making peace in the spirit of peace; and societies of every kind combining, not in this land only, but in foreign lands also, to translate the Scriptures into all languages, and to impart them to every nation under Heaven. Is not this the finger of God? and is not God's display of his own almighty operation a motive and a call to us to work together with him?

Doubtless, if ever there was a time that we were particularly encouraged to engage in missionary exertions, it is now, "The sound is already gone forth in the "tops of the mulberry-trees;" and therefore this is the time for us to "bestir ourselves; God has already gone out before us, [2 Samuel 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 5.24);" and he will be with us in all that we put our hands unto.

***~~We conclude with pointing out our duty in reference to this great event:~~***

***~~1. Let our expectations of it be enlarged.~~***

The apostle Paul represents the whole creation as waiting and longing for this blessed period, [Romans 8:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.19-22); and shall not we, "we, who already have the first-fruits of the Spirit, [Romans 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.23);" shall not we be expecting this glorious harvest? Shall we not look forward with holy joy to that time when "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ! [Revelation 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15)." O glorious day! The Lord hasten it in his time!

***~~2. Let our prayers for it be poured forth.~~***

We cannot contemplate the universal reign of peace, and love, and holiness, without feeling an ardent desire that it might immediately commence, or without crying unto God, "How long, O Lord, will you not have mercy on the world, against which you have had indignation almost six thousand years, [Zechariah 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 1.12) and [Revelation 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 6.10)." Indeed God has particularly commanded that we should pray to him on this subject, and not give him rest, until he arises and answers our petitions, [Isaiah 62:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.1-7). *We are not to imagine, that because the period is fixed in the Divine counsels, it is therefore in vain for us to pray; for God has invariably connected the accomplishment of his promises with the prayers of his people*; and however absolute his promises may be, "he will yet be inquired of, to do the things which he has promised [Ezekiel 36:36-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.36-37)."

***~~3. Let our exertions be used.~~***

God works by means; and it is by a blessing upon our efforts that he will accomplish his own gracious purposes. In this view, the answer which he gives to the petitions of his Church on this subject is very remarkable. The Church, in terms the most appropriate that can be imagined, entreats him to arise and execute this great work, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! etc. [Isaiah 51:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.9-10)."

And what is his reply! Does he content himself with renewing his promises to fulfill their desire in due season? No, he says, "Awake, awake! stand up, O Jerusalem, [Isaiah 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.17)." And again, "Awake, awake! put on your strength, O Zion! shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem! loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion, [Isaiah 52:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.1-2)."

*And so far is our entire dependence upon him from being a reason for listless inactivity, that it is the strongest reason for putting forth our utmost exertions*. We must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13)." Let all of us then awake for the occasion, and inquire what we can do for the advancement of the Gospel, either at home or abroad! How can we aid the different Societies that are established for these ends? *Let us consider our time and our talents, our wealth and our influence, yes, our bodies and our souls, as consecrated to the Lord, and as to be disposed of by him in such a way as shall be most subservient to his glory.*Then, if we live not to see the Temple of our God erected, we shall at least have the comfort of having provided materials for it; and at all events we shall secure to ourselves a rich reward; for God himself in our text assures us, that "they shall not be ashamed who wait for him."

***~~#954~~***

***~~DESPONDING FEARS REMOVED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 49:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-26)~~***

KJV. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus says the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you; and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

NIV. "Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? But this is what the LORD says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save. I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine. Then all mankind will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

*The human mind is prone to extremes.*Before we come into trials, we think them easy to be borne; but, when oppressed with them, we are apt to sink under them as an insupportable burden. The Jews, previous to their captivity in Babylon, would never believe that such an event could take place; but, when they felt the galling yoke, they could not at all conceive that their Church should ever behold such glorious days as they were encouraged to expect. Certainly, humanly speaking, there was reason enough for them to despair; for they were in a state of the most abject slavery; the people by whom they were enslaved were the most powerful of any upon earth; and they had a consciousness, that they had sold themselves into that very state, by their iniquities. Hence they ask, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" To this, however, God gives them a most gracious answer, assuring them, that he will interpose effectually in their behalf, and deliver them for his own name's sake.

But we must not confine the words to the Jewish Church. They may properly be applied to God's people in all ages; and be considered as representing:

***~~I. Their desponding fears.~~***

While men are living as without God in the world, they are for the most part unconscious of any danger; or at least they think that they are in no danger from which they may not easily be delivered. But as soon as they are awakened to a sense of their lost condition, they are apt to yield to the most discouraging apprehensions, on account of:

***~~1. Their weakness.~~***

They see that they have been in a state of captivity all their days, having been taken alive, as it were, by the devil, and been led "captive by him at his will, [2 Timothy 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.26)." And how shall they ever recover themselves from his snares? He is "the god of this world," who "rules in all the children of disobedience, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4). [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2)." Shall the prey be taken from one who is so mighty? As well might a lamb hope to deliver itself out of the jaws of a lion, as they to liberate themselves from that "roaring lion who is just ready to devour them! [1 Peter 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 5.8)."

**2. Their deservings.**

It is not their misfortune merely, but their fault, that they are in this sad bondage; they have "sold themselves to it by their iniquities, [Isaiah 50:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.1);" as Esau bartered away his rights of the first born for a bowl of stew, [Hebrews 12:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.16), so have they their liberty. They have chosen the gratifications of the flesh from the very first moment that they began to live; the indulgence of their corrupt inclinations was more to them than the favor of their God; so that *by continual and willful habits they have confirmed their natural propensities, and riveted the chains which Adam forged.*Feeling themselves thus "sold under sin, [Romans 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.14)," and become, as it were, the lawful property of Satan, they ask, "Shall the lawful captive be delivered?" The many acts of willful transgression by which they have given him a right over them, appear an insurmountable bar to their deliverance, insomuch that the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision scarcely appear in a more hopeless state than they! [Ezekiel 37:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.11). In this view of their just desert, they are tempted to say, "There is no hope! [Jeremiah 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.25)."

These feelings however may well be assuaged by,

***~~II. The gracious promises of God to them.~~***

It is delightful to observe how directly God meets the needs and wishes of his people; the very language of their fears is here adopted by him, and made the vehicle of his promises to their souls. He engages that,

***~~1. He himself will interpose for their deliverance.~~***

In a most wonderful way did he rescue his people from their captivity in Babylon. He raised up against that city an enemy; and, in the precise way that he had foretold, delivered it into his hands, even into the hands of Cyrus, whom he had specified by name over two hundred years before he existed in the world! and by him he dealt to the Babylonians that measure which they had before meted to his people. See [Jeremiah 31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31) especially verse 35, 36, 49, 56, "feeding them with their own flesh, and making them drunk with their own blood." And thus "will he bruise Satan also under his people's feet! [Romans 16:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 16.20)." As strong as Satan is, God has raised up against him One stronger than he, who has overcome him, and taken from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and utterly despoiled him! [Luke 11:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21-22). The Lord Jesus "came on purpose to destroy the works of the devil, [1 John 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.8);" and he did destroy them. "Upon the cross he triumphed over him openly, [Colossians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.15)," and "by his own death utterly destroyed him," "and delivered from his power millions whom he had held in the most cruel bondage, [Hebrews 2:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.14-15)." In his resurrection and ascension "he led captive," as it were at his chariot wheels, this malignant foe, [Ephesians 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.8); and has left his people nothing but to triumph over a vanquished enemy! [John 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.11).

Here then is Gods gracious answer to his people's fears. Are you asking, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Yes! The captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children." What more than this can any soul desire? For, is not God able to deliver? or will he falsify his Word? "Has he said, and will he not do it? has he spoken, and will he not make it good?"

But he further promises, that,

***~~2. He will glorify himself in their salvation.~~***

The deliverance of his people from Babylon, and their restoration to their own land, was an event that excited the astonishment of all the surrounding nations, "They saw, and could not but acknowledge, that he was their Savior and Redeemer, even the Mighty One of Jacob!" His own glory also will he display in the deliverance of his desponding people, as soon as ever they simply and believingly commit their cause to him. In fact, *there is not in the whole universe a more striking monument of God's power, than a redeemed soul!*"He is a new creation, [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.17). [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10)." And, if it is said, "He is still weak;" true, he is so; but he is "a worm threshing the mountains! [Isaiah 41:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.14-16);" and "God's strength shall be perfected in his weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)," and shall carry him on, though in the midst of the most potent enemies, "from strength to strength, until he shall finally appear before his God in Zion! [Psalm 84:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.7)."

To whatever circumstances he may be reduced by the assaults of men or devils, the Lord Jesus Christ will make them only a more conspicuous occasion for the display of "his own grace, which shall surely be sufficient" for all who trust in it, and shall constrain even their enemies themselves to acknowledge that the power which supports them is divine! [Daniel 3:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 3.28); [Daniel 6:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.25-27).

***~~Here then we see,~~***

***~~1. What extremes we are to avoid.~~***

*In the concerns of our souls, we should stand at an equal distance from presumption and despondency.*It surely can never be right for people, corrupt as we are, to presume upon salvation, as though it were a blessing easy to be attained. We are in a state of bondage to sin and Satan—to this our whole lives bear witness. The power of our adversary is such as no human being has within himself an ability to withstand—his victory over our first parents in Paradise is proof enough of this. Nor, considering how willing servants we have been to the destroyer, have we any just cause to expect the interposition of Jehovah in our behalf. Are we then to be secure and careless, as if we were in no danger? If "the righteous scarcely are saved," shall we be as much at our ease, as if no effort were necessary to counteract the designs of Satan, and to rescue ourselves from his dominion? No truly; we must "not be high-minded, but fear."

On the other hand, shall we, because of these difficulties and dangers, give way to a desponding frame? Shall we forget that there is a Savior, who is both able and willing to deliver us? Justly does God reprove such folly and ingratitude: Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding! [Isaiah 40:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-28)." To entertain such thoughts, is greatly to dishonor God, whose tenderness and fidelity infinitely exceed all that ever existed in a mother's bosom towards her infant offspring! verse 11-16. Whatever therefore are our difficulties or our dangers, we should confide in Him who has undertaken for us that "we shall take those captive whose captives we were, and shall rule over our oppressors! [Isaiah 14:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 14.2)."

***~~2. What is that happy medium which it befits us to observe.~~***

The proper medium is, not to lessen either our fears or our hopes; but to call them forth into united and simultaneous exercise. Instead of attempting to lessen our sense of danger, it is desirable to have it augmented a hundred-fold; because then we shall feel the deeper need of God's help, and be the more earnest in our prayers to him for it. So again, instead of lowering our expectations from God, we should endeavor to have them also greatly enlarged; because we shall then honor him the more, and go forth with tenfold energy to fight the good fight of faith! This is that union, which, *while it humbles the sinner, will exalt the Savior*, and lead us, like the heavenly hosts, to fall on our faces before him, at the very time that we are glorying in his salvation! [Revelation 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.8).

This is a point which is never fully understood, but by experience. Those who have never known it by experience, are ready to imagine, that a deep sense of guilt and helplessness will produce discouragement; and that an assured confidence in God will foster pride. But, if both are combined, as they ought to be, in our hearts, we shall possess that most desirable of all attainments, a childlike spirit, [Mark 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 10.15). Nothing servile will remain. "The fear that has torment will be swallowed up in love, [John 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.18)," while that fear which flows from love will be in full activity. We shall rejoice evermore in the God of our salvation; but shall "rejoice with trembling! [Psalm 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.11);" not "boasting as if we had put off our armor," but girding it upon us for fresh encounters, until we have accomplished our warfare, and are crowned with everlasting victory!

***~~#955~~***

***~~MESSIAH'S SUFFERINGS AND SUPPORT~~***

***~~[Isaiah 50:5-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.5-9)~~***

KJV. "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is my adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he who shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up."

NIV. "The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up!"

*In considering the prophecies, we often find that the mystical or prophetic sense is in reality the most literal; and that on some occasions, however the prophets may appear to speak of themselves, their words have little, if any, reference to themselves, and must be understood in reference to the Messiah alone*. This is particularly observable in the passage before us.

We may indeed suppose the prophet very remotely to speak of his own ministry, and to hint at his own trials and consolations; but it is obvious that the expressions cannot with any propriety be applied in their stricter sense to any but the Messiah, in whom they were most literally fulfilled. The prophet Isaiah, it is true, was more fully instructed in divine truth than any other of the prophets; and he abounds more in consolatory promises to the weary and heavy-laden, verse 4; but still we are constrained to pass him over, as having no sufficient ground to be noticed in the words before us; and we must fix our attention conclusively on the Messiah, of whom they speak.

***~~I. The Messiah's sufferings.~~***

***~~These were indeed both great and various.~~***

Not to enter into the consideration of them at large, we shall notice only those which are here brought to our view.

"He gave his back to the smiters." Scourging was no part of the punishment of those who were crucified. The thieves who were crucified with our Lord, were not scourged; and he was scourged in order to prevent his crucifixion, [John 19:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.1); [John 19:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.4-6); [John 19:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.10); [John 19:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.12); [John 19:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 19.15). But a great variety of things which had no necessary connection with each other, yes, and some which could not, except by a miraculous interposition, be combined together, were to meet in him; though therefore he was to be crucified, (which yet was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment,) he was also to be scourged; and most cruelly, as another prophecy declares, was this punishment inflicted on him, "the plowers plowing upon his back, and making long furrows there, [Psalm 129:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 129.3)."

"He gave his cheeks also to them that plucked off the hair." When the ambassadors of David were, by the command of the king of Ammon, deprived of half their beards, they considered it as so great an indignity, that they were quite ashamed; and they were ordered to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown, [2 Samuel 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 10.4-5). But the *indignity*offered to our Lord was united with much *cruelty*; for they blindfolded him, and smote him with their hands, and plucked off the hair from his face, and insultingly asked, "Prophesy Christ! Who is it that smote you [Luke 22:63-64](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.63-64)."

But besides the scourging, and plucking off his hair, we are told, They spat in his face, "He hid not his face from shame and spitting." Now in Eastern countries it is deemed an insult even to spit upon the ground in the presence of another; what then must it be to spit in his face? If a person would be so degraded by it as to be rendered fit to be excluded from the camp of Israel, [Numbers 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 12.14), what an inconceivable humiliation was it to the Son of God to be so treated! Yet thus he was treated, both in the palace of the high priest, and in Pilate's judgment-hall, and that too by the lowest of the populace. How amazing it is, that, when Uzzah had been struck dead upon the spot for only *touching*the ark, which was a symbol of God, such daring offenders as these, who so insulted the incarnate Deity himself, should escape, as it were, with impunity! But such were the sufferings which, as our Surety, Jesus was ordained to bear; and they all came upon him in due season.

***~~But he willingly undertook to sustain them all.~~***

Because in the verse preceding our text the "wakening of his ear" is mentioned, it is generally supposed that the expression of "opening his ear" is of exactly the same import. But we apprehend that the former expression refers to his preparation for his great office, and the latter to the engagement which he made to sustain and execute it. In this view there is a peculiar importance in it, especially as introducing the account of all his sufferings; and it is exactly parallel to a passage in the Psalms, where the same subject is treated of. Compare [Psalm 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.6-8) and [Hebrews 10:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.5-7) with [Exodus 21:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 21.6).

David, beyond a doubt, refers to the appointment of God, that the slave, who, instead of claiming his liberty at the sabbatic year, should choose to continue in his master's service, should have his ear bored to the door-post with an awl by his master, and should never afterwards be free.

Thus our blessed Lord undertook to execute all that was necessary for our redemption; and submitted, as it were, to have "his ear opened," in token that he would never recede from his engagements. Accordingly we find, that, in the most trying circumstances, he "never turned back;" but, on the contrary, when the time for enduring them was arrived, "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, [Luke 9:51](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 9.51)." It is true, he prayed for the removal of the bitter cup, if men could possibly be saved without his drinking it; but at the same time he submitted to drink it, saying, "Not my will, but may your will be done, [Matthew 26:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 26.39)." And again, when so oppressed in spirit that he knew not what to do, he said, "And now, Father, what shall I say? Save me from this hour? No! For this cause I came unto this hour; Father, glorify your name [John 12:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.27-28)."

At the time of his apprehension in the garden, he proved, by striking all his enemies to the ground with a word, that he could, it he chose, deliver himself from them; but he then meekly gave himself up into their hands, requiring only the peaceful dismissal of his servants, [John 18:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 18.4-8). Thus manifestly did he show that all his sufferings were voluntary, and that he endured them all in obedience to his Father's will, [Philippians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.8). But in this same prophecy we have occasion to notice,

***~~II. The Messiah's supports.~~***

In the whole of his Mediatorial work he acted as the servant of the Father in whom he confided, [Isaiah 49:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.3). [John 14:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.31).

***~~1. Jesus was assured of effectual support.~~***

The Father had promised to uphold him under all his sufferings, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); [Isaiah 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.6); [Psalm 89:19-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.19-29); and on this promise he relied. Behold, how repeatedly, and with what assurance he asserts, "The Lord God will help me!" and with what triumph he defies his bitterest enemies, "Who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me." I fear none of their accusations; for "He is near who justifies me." I dread not any sentence of theirs; for I know that they cannot finally prevail against me, "I know that I shall not be ashamed or confounded;" My "strength shall be according to my day;" and therefore, "I set my face as a flint" against all the powers both of earth and Hell. Yes, this assurance comforted and strengthened him, under all his trials, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved, [Psalm 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.8)." Hence arose that calmness and composure which so astonished Pilate, "How is it that you will not answer me a word; don't you know that I have power to crucify you, and power to release you?" No, says our Lord, "you could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above."

***~~2. Jesus was assured of a triumphant outcome.~~***

Already did he see his enemies vanquished, even when they supposed themselves to have triumphed over him. He saw that in every conflict he would be victorious; and that even his deepest humiliations should be attended with unquestionable demonstrations of his righteous character. In the midst of his trial, his very judge was constrained to proclaim his innocence; and, while he yet hung upon the cross, both Heaven and earth bore testimony to him as a suffering God. At the appointed season, after his death, he was "proved to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead."

His ascension also to the right hand of God in the presence of his disciples, and his sending down the Holy Spirit to testify of him, effectually removed the scandal of his cross, and proved him to be the true Messiah, the Savior of the world.

All this he foresaw; and the foresight of it enabled him to sustain the accumulated load of all his sufferings. He foresaw that his enemies would all "wax old as a garment, and that the very moth should eat them up;" while he and his cause should live forever. And what now has become of the chief priests and elders, or of Pilate his judge? Yes, what has become of the Jewish nation itself, and of the whole Roman empire? They are all vanished; but "Christ lives, and is alive for evermore;" and his kingdom is established in the world, and shall shortly be extended over the face of the whole earth. The prospect of this, I say, supported our adorable Emmanuel through all his sufferings; as an inspired Apostle also has informed us; it was "for the joy that was set before him," of ransoming and saving a ruined world, "he endured the cross, and despised the shame;" and "he has now sat down on the right hand of the throne of God, [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

***~~Let us now pause, and contemplate this holy sufferer:~~***

***~~1. As the predicted Savior of the world.~~***

What was there in the whole book of prophecy which he did not fulfill? However contradictory in appearance the predictions were, every, the minutest of them, has been accomplished in him. He did not give up the spirit until he could say, in reference to them all, "It is finished!" The particulars mentioned in our text we see recorded in the Gospels; we see also the steadfastness with which he pursued his course, and the complete triumph of his cause in the world.

Let us look to him then as the appointed Savior; let us assure ourselves that he is able to save us to the uttermost. Let our confidence be in him, as his was in his Father, "let us live by him, as he lived by his Father." Let us not doubt, but that, through the merit of his blood and the efficacy of his grace, we shall triumph even as he has triumphed, and be partakers of his kingdom and glory for evermore!

***~~2. As the great pattern of all holy obedience.~~***

In the whole of his life, and especially in his sufferings, he was intended to be a pattern and example to us, [1 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.21). [Hebrews 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.3). What if we are not treated precisely as he was, in scourging, and smiting, and spitting—we may be assured that we shall in some respect or other, have both shame and suffering to endure for him. All his followers are, and must be, cross-bearers, "if men called the Master Beelzebub, much more will they those of his household." Let us therefore "arm ourselves with the mind that was in him, [1 Peter 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.1);" and especially let us maintain the same holy confidence in our God. This is assuredly both our duty and our privilege, [Romans 8:33-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.33-39). Mark the peculiar correspondence of this passage with the text, both in spirit and expression; and we may comfort ourselves with this reflection, that, "if we suffer with him—then we shall also be glorified together."

***~~#956~~***

***~~A WORD IN SEASON~~***

***~~[Isaiah 50:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10-11)~~***

KJV. "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of my hand, you shall lie down in sorrow.

NIV. "Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment!"

Our blessed Lord was thoroughly furnished for the great work he had undertaken; he had "the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season" to every character. In the days of his flesh he encouraged the weary and heavy-laden with most affectionate invitations; but against the proud and persecuting Pharisees he denounced the heaviest woes. Thus also he did in the passage before us. It is in his name that the prophet speaks; it was he who "gave his back to the smiters," and encountered all his enemies with a full assurance of final success; and he it is who, in the text, proclaims,

***~~I. Comfort to the desponding.~~***

***~~There are some of God's people, who, notwithstanding their integrity, walk in a disconsolate and desponding frame.~~***

For the most part, the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness and peace; though there may be found some exceptions to this general rule. Not but that real and pure religion must of necessity make men happy; but there are some, whose views of divine truth are clouded, whose souls are harassed with the temptations of Satan, and who are at the same time too much under the influence of unbelief—who therefore, as might well be expected, are not happy; notwithstanding they truly "fear God, and conscientiously obey his voice, they are in darkness and have no light;" at least, their hope is so faint and glimmering, that it scarcely affords them any support at all. If we were not able to assign any reason for the divine conduct in this particular, it would be quite sufficient for us to know that God never allows his people to be "in heaviness through manifold temptations," except when he sees some peculiar "necessity" for such a dispensation towards them, [1 Peter 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.6).

***~~But to them is directed the most encouraging advice.~~***

Do not let such people say, "The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me, [Isaiah 49:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14);" let them not conclude, that because their hemisphere is dark, it shall never be light; (for "light is sown for the righteous, [Psalm 97:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 97.11)," though it may not instantly spring up) but "let them trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God." *The name of the Lord is a strong tower, where they may run, and in which they may find safety*, [Proverbs 18:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 18.10). By "the name of the Lord" we may understand all by which he has revealed himself to man, and especially that adorable Savior "in whom his name is," and "in whom all his promises are *yes*and *amen*;" in him let them trust as a reconciled God and Father; yes, under the most distressing circumstances let them "encourage themselves in the Lord their God, [1 Samuel 30:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 30.6);" and if he appears to frown, still let them say with Job: Though he slays me—yet will I trust in him [Job 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 13.15). And whenever disquieting thoughts arise, let them chide their unbelief, as David did, [Psalm 42:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.11); and *determine, if they perish, to perish at the foot of the cross, pleading for mercy in the name of Jesus.*

To people, however, of a different description, the Lord changes his voice; and speaks:

***~~II. Terror to the secure.~~***

***~~While some are disquieted without a cause—there are others who are causelessly secure.~~***

To "kindle a fire and compass ourselves with its sparks" seems a natural and obvious expression for seeking our own ease and pleasure; and this may be done, either by self-pleasing endeavors to "establish a righteousness of our own, instead of submitting to the righteousness of God;" or by giving up ourselves to worldly occupations and carnal enjoyments. Now those who find all their satisfaction in one or other of these ways, are very numerous; while they who serve God in sincerity, but walk in darkness, are comparatively very few. This is strongly intimated in the text, "Who is, etc. Behold, *all*you, etc." and so persuaded are they, for the most part, of the happy outcome of their conduct, that they will scarcely listen to anything which may be spoken to undeceive them. But, however numerous or confident they may be, their state is widely different from what they apprehend.

***~~To them, God addresses a most solemn warning.~~***

Sometimes, when the obstinacy of men renders them almost incorrigible, God speaks to them in a way of irony. Here he bids them go on in their own way, and get all the comfort they can; but warns them withal what doom they must assuredly expect at his hands. Precisely similar to this is his warning to the same description of people in [Ecclesiastes 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 11.9).

And how often is it awfully realized in a dying hour! When they are lying on a bed of "sickness, how much wrath and sorrow" are mixed in their cup, [Ecclesiastes 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 5.17). And, the very instant they depart out of the body, what "tribulation and anguish" seize hold upon them! *Alas! Who can conceive what it is to lie down in everlasting burnings?*Yet thus shall their lamp be extinguished; and their *sparks of creature comfort*be followed by a fire that shall never be quenched! [Job 18:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 18.5-6).

***~~We cannot conclude this subject better than by directing the attention of all to two important truths connected with it:~~***

***~~1. To believe God's Word is our truest wisdom.~~***

What advice can be given to a disconsolate soul better than that administered in the text? We may "offer thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil; yes, we may give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul;" but we can never attain comfort in any other way than by a humble trust in the promises of God. We must "even against hope, believe in hope, [Romans 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.18)." Our "joy and peace must come by believing."

Nor is there less folly in arguing against the threatenings of God, than in questioning his promises. If God says respecting those who rest in self-righteous observances, or carnal enjoyments, that they shall lie down in sorrow—our disbelief of it will not make void his Word; the threatening will come to pass, even if the whole creation should unite to oppose it. Though men therefore may account it folly to believe the Word of God, let us remember, that it is our truest wisdom; and that without a humble trust in it, we cannot be happy either in time or eternity!

***~~2. To obey God's Word is our truest happiness.~~***

We cannot have a more unfavorable picture of religion, nor a more favorable view of a carnal state, than in the text; yet who would hesitate which state to prefer? Who would not rather be "altogether such as Paul," notwithstanding his chains—than be like Festus or Agrippa on their thrones? [Acts 16:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.29). Who would not rather be in the destitute condition of Lazarus, and attain his end—than live as Dives for a little time, and then lack a drop of water to cool his tongue? [Luke 16:19-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.19-24). Yes, the most afflictive circumstances of a pious man are infinitely preferable, all things considered, to the most prosperous state which an ungodly man can enjoy. The pious man sows in tears, to reap in joy. The ungodly man sows the wind, to reap the whirlwind! [Hosea 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 8.7). Let us then be persuaded that to serve God is our truest happiness, and that in keeping his commandments there is great reward! "They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward!" [Psalm 19:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 19.10-11)

***~~#957~~***

***~~CONSOLATION FOR THE AFFLICTED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 51:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.1-3)~~***

KJV. "Hearken to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence you are hewn, and in the hole of the pit whence you are dug. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

NIV. "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many. The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing!"

*An attention to the voice of God in his Word would comfort us under all troubles, and keep us steadfast amidst all the vicissitudes of life.* God, anxious for the welfare of his people, has just before exhorted them, when walking in darkness, to trust in him, [Isaiah 50:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.10). He now bids them to bear in mind his former mercies, and expect yet richer blessings at his hands, when the destined period of their captivity shall have elapsed. Thus did God provide comfort for them against the day of their calamity; and the same comfort is reserved for all his people in their seasons of darkness or affliction. To obtain the consolation which the text is suited to convey, it will be proper to consider,

***~~I. What God has done for us already.~~***

The description given of God's people is sufficiently appropriate, and will distinguish them from all other people upon earth. They "seek" the favor of "the Lord," and "follow after" it with incessant care in the way of "righteousness." But,

***~~They once had little hope of ever attaining the blessings which they now enjoy.~~***

The Jewish nation was to descend from Abraham; but the promised seed was not given him until, according to the course of nature, there was no probability that his family should be increased. There was then little reason to expect that that nation ever should exist.

In the same way, the people of God may look back upon the time when they were hewn from a rock, and as dug out of a hole of a pit. How little prospect was there then, that they should ever form a part of God's spiritual building! *They were as blind, as stupid, as averse to God and a holy life—as any pagan idolaters on earth!*[Romans 3:10-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.10-19); [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7). If they "did not run to the same excess of riot" as others, they were restrained merely by the overruling providence of God, and not by any hatred of sin which they had more than others.

***~~Yet they are now "called and blessed" of the Lord.~~***

The descendants of Abraham rapidly increased, and in process of time formed a very numerous and powerful nation. Who that beheld them at their departure from Egypt would have imagined that, only four hundred years before, these two million people had no existence but in the loins of Abraham? Who that sees a person now following Jesus and holiness—would ever imagine that he was once a hateful and determined enemy of God, and had a nature as corrupt as any of his fellow-creatures?

Let the saints remember what they once were, that they may see what great things the Lord has done for them in His wondrous mercy! Let them "walk softly all the days of their life" under a sense of their former guilt; and stand amazed at the sovereign grace of their God, who has so distinguished them with His favor.

Nor is this anything more than a pledge of,

**II. What God has engaged to do.**

As the Church at large, so every individual member of it may be in very afflictive circumstances.

The Jews were reduced to the greatest distress during their captivity in Babylon; and their once fertile country was become a wilderness; nor could they remember Zion but with deep sorrow and regret.

In the same way, the people of God at this time may be brought into great tribulation. Through persecution or temptation their "sorrows may be enlarged," and their joys be turned into pain and anguish.

***~~But God promises to interpose for them in the time of need.~~***

He repeatedly foretold that he would deliver his people from their Babylonish captivity; and restore them with joy and triumph to their own land. This was a faint representation of what he would do for the true seed of Abraham under the Christian dispensation. He will revive his people with spiritual consolations. He will make their hearts, which now seem barren, or productive only of thorns, to be "fruitful in every good word and work." Paradise itself, before sin had deformed its beauty, was a just emblem of what the soul shall be when God returns to visit it. The harp hung upon the willows shall be strung anew, "joy and gladness" shall succeed to the effusions of sorrow, and the groans of contrition yield to "thanksgivings and the voice of melody." Let but the afflicted soul tarry the Lord's leisure, and it shall surely experience the wished-for deliverance.

To encourage all to confide in this promise, let us consider,

***~~III. In what respects the recollection of mercies received, may strengthen our expectations of those that are promised.~~***

Nothing could be more animating to the Jews in Babylon than the recollection of what God had done in raising so flourishing a tree from the dead stock of Sarah's womb, and in continuing to water it for so many centuries, notwithstanding the bad fruit it had continued to produce.

Nor can anything *be more consoling to us than a retrospective view of God's dealings with us.*In them we may behold,

***~~1. His sovereign grace.~~***

In everything relative to the raising of the Jewish nation God displayed his sovereignty. And may we not behold the same in his choice of us? Why did he particularly hew *us*out of the quarry, while such a mass of stone, equally fit for his purpose, was left behind? Why did he "form us into vessels of honor," while so much of the very "same lump was left to form vessels of dishonor?" Who shall deny the fact that such a selection has been made? or "Who shall say unto God, What do you?" Shall any drooping saints then despond because of their unworthiness? Let them remember, that, as God never chose them for their superior worthiness, so he may still continue his favors towards them notwithstanding their unworthiness; his grace is still his own as much as ever; and, if they do but lament their unworthiness and cast themselves on his mercy, it shall still be glorified in their restoration and bliss.

**2. His almighty power.**

As the Omnipotence of God was manifest in producing such a nation from two, whose "bodies were as good as dead," so is it no less visible in the "quickening of those who are dead in sin," and forming "an host of living saints from those who were like dry bones scattered over the face of the earth." Can any then, who have been quickened by grace, doubt whether God is able to preserve or restore them? Can "anything appear to them too hard for God?" Surely though their souls appear at present only like a desert or a wilderness, they need "not stagger at the promises of God;" but yet may entertain the hope that they may "blossom as the rose," yes, that they shall "put off their sackcloth, and gird them with gladness."

**3. His unchanging faithfulness.**

After God had promised to Abraham, he never would renege; though he delayed, he did not forget his promise; and even when constrained to punish his people, he did not cast them off. Not even at this time are they finally abandoned; but are preserved a distinct people, monuments of God's faithfulness, and a seed for a future harvest.

And *is not every saint a momentous monument of God's sovereign love, mercy, and grace!*Would anyone stone of God's building have withstood the shocks and tempests that have assaulted it, if God himself had not interposed to keep it fixed on the foundation? Would not every vessel of his sanctuary have been dashed in pieces times without number, if the potter himself had not averted the stroke, or hardened us to endure it? *Where is there a saint who is not a wonder to himself, a spark kept alive in the midst of the ocean?*Well then may the faithfulness we have already experienced confirm our hope, that God "will never leave us nor forsake us." And well may the most disconsolate of God's people wait, "knowing in whom they have believed," and assuredly expecting the promised revival.

**APPLICATION.**

Let us hearken to the advice given us in the text:

1. Let us, both for our humiliation and comfort, review the dispensations of God's providence and grace towards us!

2. Let us, under our heaviest trials, look forward to the season when God's promises shall receive their final accomplishment!

***~~#958~~***

***~~A DISSUASIVE FROM THE FEAR OF MAN~~***

***~~[Isaiah 51:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.7-8)~~***

KJV. "Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; Do not fear the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

NIV. "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations."

Our heavenly Father, anxious that we should attend to his Word in everything, uses various means to impress it on our minds. Sometimes he issues his commands with authority, and enforces them with threatenings of his displeasure. At other times he exhorts with more than parental tenderness, and persuades us with the most encouraging considerations.

Thus, in the chapter before us, he says no less than three times, "Hearken to me, O my people! verses 1, 4, 7." In that spirit we would now address you. It is in Jehovah's name that we speak, yes, and in his very place and stead, [2 Corinthians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.20); and we entreat you to listen with an obedient ear, while we guard you against one of the most dangerous snares in which Satan ever entangles the souls of men. We invite your attention then to the words of our text, and beg you to consider,

***~~I. The fact here supposed—the the ungodly will hate and persecute the godly.~~***

***~~This supposition does certainly at first sight appear strange.~~***

Had it been intimated, that people professing religion and at the same time dishonoring it by their conduct, would be objects of reproach, it would have been nothing but what we might reasonably expect; because hypocrisy is more detestable than even the most flagrant vice. But that people "in whose heart is God's law," and who consequently reverence and obey all the commandments of God, should be reviled and hated, seems almost incredible! We should be ready to think that such people would rather be universally loved and honored, not only because all occasion of blame is cut off from them, but because there is in them an assemblage of all that is virtuous and praiseworthy.

***~~But the fact supposed, is common in all ages.~~***

The very first-born of the human race hated and murdered his own brother, for no other cause than his superior piety. It was on similar grounds that Ishmael mocked and derided his brother Isaac. Our blessed Lord experienced similar treatment from the men of his day; and has taught all his followers to expect the same. After portraying the character of his people in a great variety of particulars, he adds, "Blessed are you, when men shall hate and revile you! [Matthew 5:3-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.3-11) and [Luke 6:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.20-23)." We are ready to wonder that such an expression should be introduced in such a connection; but a little observation will suffice to convince us that that addition was not made without reason.

***~~Nor is it difficult to account for this fact.~~***

The natural man hates God! [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.7); and consequently hates his image, wherever it appears. Moreover, men have established a false standard for judging; viewing things only in reference to this present life. What wonder then if *the world accounts those to be fools and madmen, who disregard the things of time and sense, and look only to the things that are invisible and eternal?*But, in condemning the godly, they are actuated also in no small degree by self-defense. *It is obvious that if the godly are right, then the ungodly must be wrong; yes, if there is only a remote probability that the godly may be right, the ungodly must be wrong, because they do not pause to examine carefully into the truth or falsehood of their own opinions. Hence the ungodly decide at once, and load the godly with revilings and reproach, as the only, or, at least, the easiest way of justifying their own conduct!*

The existence of this fact being clearly ascertained, let us contemplate,

***~~II. The advice here given in reference to the fear of man.~~***

***~~1. The advice itself.~~***

The human mind naturally shrinks back from revilings and reproach; and well it may, when anything really disgraceful is imputed to us. Such a regard to the opinions of men, so far from being wrong, is truly amiable and praiseworthy; and a lack of it would argue extreme degeneracy, and inveterate corruption. *None but those who are hardened with pride, and insensible to shame, will ever presume to set public opinion at defiance*.

But where "the revilings and reproach" are wholly unmerited, and we have the testimony of our own consciences that we are "persecuted only for righteousness sake," we may then discard all fear, and all concern about the ignominy to which we are exposed. This distinction is made by Peter, [1 Peter 4:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.14-16). In such a case we do well to "set our face as a flint against the whole world," and even to glory in the reproaches that are cast upon us. Under such circumstances we do not hesitate to repeat the advice which God himself gives us in the text, "Do not fear the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings."

We should not so entirely exclude all prudential considerations as to prescribe exactly the same line of conduct to all people; because we can conceive many situations in which reserve and caution are expedient, with a view to greater ultimate good. But *in all cases, and under all circumstances, the fear of man must be put away; and we must follow what we believe to be the true line of our duty, even though the whole world should combine to censure and condemn us!*

***~~2. The considerations with which it is enforced.~~***

What is man, or what is his reproach, that we should be afraid of anything that he can say? Let him carry his enmity to the uttermost, he can do no more than kill the body—our spiritual and eternal interests are wholly out of his reach! [Luke 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.4-5); and, in a little time, the proudest persecutor will be as impotent as the worm he treads on, "the very moth shall eat him up like a garment."

What had become of those who, in different and distant ages, have set themselves against the Lord and his Christ? they are swept away, and "gone to their own place."

But the Gospel which they opposed, still survives and nourishes, and proves at this day as effectual for the salvation of men as ever. *The doctrine of a crucified Savior is still as precious as at any period of the world; it still avails to heal the wounds which sin has inflicted, and to fill with light and peace and joy the souls of the weary and heavy-laden.*

And, while the Gospel itself continues unchanged, what is now the state of those who once suffered reproach for the Gospel's sake? Are they the less happy on account of what they once endured? Do they now regret that they exposed themselves to ignominy and contempt for the sake of Christ? No! Their felicity has been inconceivably enhanced by every persecution they endured? And throughout all eternity will they rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Redeemer's sake! See these different states described, [Isaiah 66:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.5); [Isaiah 65:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.13-14).

What reason then have we to fear enemies who are so incapable of inflicting on us any serious injury, and over whom our triumph will be so speedy, so complete, so certain, so glorious! *The smallest reflection on the eternal states of the godly and the ungodly, will surely reconcile us to any trials or troubles that we may be called to suffer in our way to Heaven.*

***~~Let us now add a word:~~***

***~~1. Of caution.~~***

While we exhort all to despise reproach, we must entreat you so to walk, as not to merit it. If people professing godliness act in any respect unworthy of their profession, they bring contempt, not on themselves only, but on religion itself; and the very truth of God will be evil spoken of on account of their reproachful life.

*It is possible too to bring just reproach on ourselves, by indulging in needless singularities.*Religion is a wise and sober thing; and is calculated to "make us perfect in every good work." We would entreat you therefore to "cut off occasion from those who seek occasion against you," and to "walk wisely before God in a perfect way."

If you profess to "know righteousness," let your whole conduct prove that the "law of God is in your heart." This is of such infinite importance, that we cannot forbear urging it upon you after the example of God himself, "Hearken to me, hearken to me, hearken to me, O my people!"

**2. Of encouragement.**

Though we are to expect nothing but revilings and reproach for our fidelity to God, it is possible that we may in reality be honored for that very conduct, which, in appearance, has exposed us to shame. For *there is something in a holy and consistent life which carries a secret conviction to the minds of our accusers*, and tends not only to silence them, [1 Peter 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.12); [1 Peter 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.15), but to win them [1 Peter 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 3.1). And, though we can never hope that an unconverted man shall love us, we may hope that he shall "be at peace with us, [Proverbs 16:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 16.7)," and even become a witness for us against those who yet load us with their reproaches, [Luke 23:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.14-15); [Luke 23:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.22).

But, however this may be, man's judgment is but for a day, See [1 Corinthians 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3); and then the Lord's time will come, and our righteousness will shine forth as the noon-day sun [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.5). Be contented then to follow your Divine Master, and to bear your cross as he has done before you; and be assured, that "if you suffer with him, you shall also be glorified together with him! [1 Peter 4:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12-13). [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17)."

***~~#959~~***

***~~THE CHURCH PLEADING WITH GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 51:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.9-10)~~***

KJV. "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are you not it that has cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Are you not it which has dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that has made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

NIV. "Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?"

*God delights in encouraging his people when they are reduced to the lowest ebb of despondency.*Hence, under the bitterest oppression, he assures them that the period shall soon arrive for the administering of consolation to their souls, and for the enlargement of the Church by a vast accession of Gentiles to her. And, to impress his assurances more strongly on their minds, he again and again repeats that most condescending and affectionate entreaty, "Hearken to me, you who follow after righteousness;" "hearken unto me, my people;" "hearken unto me, you in whose heart is my Law! verse 1, 4, 7."

Of such addresses, it befits his people, under their heaviest distresses, to take advantage. As Benhadad, when captive to the king of Israel, and expecting nothing but death, charged his servants to observe with the utmost diligence whether any favorable expression dropped from the lips of Ahab, and to take immediate advantage of it, [1 Kings 20:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 20.33)—so should we, when we hear the offended Majesty of Heaven addressing us in such terms of grace and mercy.

But his ancient people, listening only to their own desponding fears, complained, as it were, of him, as if he had become regardless of their cries, and indifferent to their welfare. This was not good. Yet as, on the whole, their importunity was pleasing unto God, I shall consider the words before us:

***~~I. As expressing the desires of God's ancient Church.~~***

The Jewish Church are here represented as in a most disconsolate state, under the pressure of severe trials, and under the apprehension of yet more grievous oppressions. And they call on God, in the most urgent manner, to interpose for their deliverance.

***~~The terms they use are not in themselves improper.~~***

Certainly, at first sight, it appears irreverent to speak of God as though he needed to be "awakened" from sleep. But this is a mere *figure of speech*; importing only a desire that he would, after the example of former times, exert his power in their behalf. David expresses the idea vet more fully, when he says, "Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression? [Psalm 44:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.23-24)." What David meant by these strong expressions, appears from the first verse of that very Psalm, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what you did in their days, in the times of old." Bearing in mind God's wonders of old time, he was anxious to have them renewed at the period wherein he lived. "Our soul (like that of our forefathers) is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaves unto the earth; arise for our help, and redeem us for your mercies' sake! [Psalm 44:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.1); [Psalm 44:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.25-26)."

***~~Nor was there anything unfitting in their pleas.~~***

In the language of Scripture, *Egypt*is often called "Rahab;" and *Pharaoh*is characterized as "a dragon, [Psalm 87:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.4). [Ezekiel 29:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 29.3)." Against these God has exerted his power to their utter destruction; while, for the effectual deliverance of his people, he had "dried the waters of the great deep, and made the depths of the sea a way for his ransomed to pass over."

A similar interposition they needed yet again in Babylon; as they do also at this very hour. Hence they, both in Babylon and in their present dispersion, are represented as reminding God of his former mercies, and as urgently imploring at his hands a renewal of them. And, no doubt, a repetition of these mercies, or of deliverances equivalent to them, shall yet take place in their behalf; for it is expressly said, "The LORD will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt! [Isaiah 11:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.15-16)."

But the text is chiefly worthy of observation,

***~~II. As affording a pattern for God's afflicted people in all ages.~~***

Two things it clearly teaches us:

***~~1. That we should bear in remembrance God's past mercies.~~***

The inspired writers are continually referring to the wonders wrought by Jehovah in behalf of his people in *Egypt*and in the *wilderness*.

God himself refers to them, as marking in a most extraordinary manner his power and grace, and as fitly illustrating his proper character, "Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters."

And should not we also bear those wonders in remembrance? *Are they not shadows of that great redemption which God has wrought for us in the Son of his love, and which it is the privilege of every individual among us to experience in his own soul?*

Have not we been held under a bondage infinitely more oppressive than that of Egypt—a bondage to sin and Satan, death and Hell? And have not we been delivered, not by power only, but by price—even the precious blood of God's only dear Son?

Are not the wonders of the wilderness also the very same as are wrought for us in Christ; who is the true *bread*of Heaven given for the sustenance of our souls, and the true *rock*also, from whence the waters of life are ever flowing for our refreshment?

Nay, more; should we not bear in mind, also, the mercies given individually to ourselves:  
our temporal blessings;  
our conversion to God;  
our preservation from sin;  
our restoration from falls and backslidings;  
our peace with God;  
our hope in Christ;  
our consolations in the midst of trials?

Methinks every one of us has within his own bosom a counterpart of all that God has ever done for the salvation of the world; and if we did but call to mind the mercies with which we have been daily loaded from our youth up to this present moment, we never would lack memorials of God's love to us, or grounds for encouragement under the most afflictive dispensations.

**2. That we should make God's *past mercies*to us, the grounds and measure of our *future expectations*.**

I well know, that, strictly speaking, we have no ground of expectation, but from the promises of God. But, in a more general sense, we may say, that his *past mercies are pledges and pledges of future blessings*. It is a legitimate inference which the Psalmist draws, "You have delivered my soul from death; will you not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living, [Psalm 56:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.13).' Yes; if we can say of God, "You *have*delivered;" we may reasonably add, "In whom I trust that he will *yet*deliver, [2 Corinthians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.10)."

But we may go further, and consider God's past mercies as the measure of our future expectations. It is in this particular view that the Church reminds him of the wonders he had wrought for them in Egypt and at the sea; and, with a special view to this, may we also repeat all the wonders of redeeming love. In truth, we have in this respect a great advantage over the Jewish Church; for they might need, yes, and do need, mercies fully equal to those which were wrought for their forefathers in Egypt; but we never can need another Savior to die for us, another Spirit to instruct us. God, if I may so say, has*gone to the utmost possible extent of love and grace for us; and all that we can ever need to have done for us, in the future, falls infinitely short of what he has already done*. "For if, when we *were*enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son—then much more, being reconciled, we *shall be*saved by his life, [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.10)."

The blessings given to Israel fell infinitely short of those which have been given to us, even as shadows do of the substance which they represent. Yet, if we needed the sea to open us a passage, and the clouds to supply our daily food, and water to issue from a rock, we should account them great things to ask. But, after what we have received, nothing is great; not even Heaven with all its glory; for "if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all—then how shall he not with him also freely give us all things, [Romans 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.32)."

**ADDRESS.**

***~~1. Those who are humbled under a sense of sin.~~***

It may be, your sins have been very great; and you are ready to account yourselves so unworthy, that it is scarcely to be hoped that God should ever have mercy upon you. But bear in mind the sovereignty he exercised in the call of *Abraham*. Was he not an idolater, in the midst of an idolatrous people? [Joshua 24:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 24.2-3). Yet God chose *him*, and enter into covenant with him, and bless, in him and in his seed, all the nations of the earth.

*Why, then, may he not display his sovereignty in the exercise of love to you?* Perhaps your sins have been, beyond measure, deep and multiplied. Still, did not Manasseh obtain mercy, after having set up idols in the very House of God, and "made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with the blood of innocent people! [2 Kings 21:1-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 21.1-7); [2 Kings 21:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 21.16) with [2 Chronicles 33:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 33.11-13)."

But your hearts, you will say, have raged with enmity against God and his Christ. So it was with Paul, who yet obtained mercy, while in the very act of persecuting the Lord's people; and "therefore obtained mercy, that in him, Jesus Christ might show forth all patience, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting! [1 Timothy 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.16)."

Perhaps you will say, that your state is the more hopeless, because you have backslidden from God, and so fallen as to make "the very name of God to be blasphemed in the world." Well, supposing even this to be the case, you still may go unto God, and say, "Are you not He who showed mercy to an adulterous, a murderous, a hardened and obdurate David? 2 Samuel 12:13." Be your state as desperate as it may—yet see whether you cannot find in the divine records some interpositions of God fully adequate to your needs, and commensurate with your necessities? Take these; spread them before God in prayer; plead them before him; and implore at his hands a similar effort in your own behalf.

Mistake me not, however; imagine not, for a moment, that I say these things to encourage you in sin. God forbid! No; but I say them to keep you from despair; and what the Jewish Church are represented as doing under their extremities, that I recommend every sinner in the universe to do.*Call to mind God's wonders of old time; and let them be the ground of your hopes, and the measure of your expectations.*

***~~2. Those who are bowed down under affliction.~~***

In your case, more especially, may the Jewish Church be proposed for an example. You well remember how the whole nation cried out at the sight of Pharaoh and his hosts, and how utterly they despaired of help. But their extremity was the very season when God interposed for their effectual deliverance, making the very depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over. To you, then, he is now saying, "Come down into the very depths of the sea"—it is there that you shall see my wonders in your behalf. Do not be frightened, "though the waves thereof roar;" for "when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when through the foaming surge, it shall not overflow you! [Isaiah 43:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.2)." Nay, they shall be your very safeguard from the foe that pursues you; and shall be the destruction of those that would destroy your soul.

Realize in your minds, brethren, this consolatory truth, that "tribulation is the way to the kingdom, [Acts 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 14.22);" and then, whatever you may suffer, you will give thanks to God, who, not in anger, but "in faithfulness, has caused you to be afflicted! [Psalm 119:75](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.75)."

***~~3. Those who despond in relation to the Church.~~***

The Jews at this day appear to many to be in so desperate a state, as to render any efforts in their behalf vain and nugatory. But are they in a more hopeless condition than they were in Egypt or in Babylon? or is God less able to deliver now, than he was in the days of old! Surely not, "His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear [Isaiah 59:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.1)." If there were only among us a holy importunity, crying, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord"—then truly, his arm should be revealed; and he would work, as in the days of old. Be it so; there are seas of difficulty in our way; but cannot "He who cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, and dried up the sea for his people," interpose now with equal effect, and glorify himself in our salvation? He can; he will; he has spoken it; and his Word shall stand.

Yes, "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! verse 11.

***~~#960~~***

***~~DESPONDENCY REPROVED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.1-3)~~***

KJV. "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the impure. Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus says the Lord, You have sold yourselves for nothing; and you shall be redeemed without money."

NIV. "Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion. For this is what the LORD says: "You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed."

*Nothing is more common than for men to cast aspersions upon God, when the fault is wholly in themselves*. The ungodly world, when urged to devote themselves to God, agreeably to the divine commands, will allege that those commands are themselves unreasonable, because it is not in their power to obey them. Thus they cast the blame, not on themselves, for the inveteracy of their evil habits and the alienation of their hearts from God—but upon God himself, as requiring so much at their hands. It were well if this disposition were not found also among people professing godliness.

But the godly themselves, under the power of temptation, are apt to complain of God, as unwilling to hear their prayer, and to deliver them from their troubles—when, in fact, they neglect to use the means through which alone they are authorized to expect success. This the Jewish Church had done; saying, in a querulous tone, to God, "Awake, awake; put on strength, O arm of the Lord! [Isaiah 51:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.5)."

But the Lord retorts upon them the accusation, and says, "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion!" That is, 'Do not stand complaining of me, as if I were inattentive to your welfare; but exert the powers which you have; and, in the diligent use of them, expect my promised blessing.'

The words thus explained will give me a just occasion to observe:

***~~I. That we should exert ourselves, as if all depended on our own efforts.~~***

***~~To this the Jews were called, in the midst of all their discouragements.~~***

In the Babylonish captivity, despondency prevailed among them, as if it were not possible for them ever to be delivered. But it befit them, like Daniel, to study the prophecies relating to their captivity; and, in a state of holy preparation, confidently to expect deliverance at God's appointed time. "Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD. But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard, [Isaiah 52:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.11-12)."

The promise that "there should no more come into Jerusalem the uncircumcised and the impure," evidently directs our minds to a period yet future; for not only was Jerusalem invaded after their return from Babylon, but the very worship of the temple was suspended by Antiochus; their city also, and temple, und polity, were subsequently destroyed by the Romans; and their whole nation have now remained above seventeen hundred years in a state of utter desolation and dispersion.

But they must not on that account despond. The prophecies relating to their future restoration shall surely be fulfilled; and it befits them all to be in a state of holy expectation; just as Abraham was, when, at the distance of two thousand years, "he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced!"

This gives us what I apprehend to be the true view of our text; *God directs his complaining people to anticipate with joy that blissful period*, "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; (even as a bride expecting the speedy arrival of the bridegroom,) for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the impure; (after their restoration, no Chaldean, or other foe, shall ever overwhelm them again.) Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

***~~To this also every desponding saint is called.~~***

*There is no condition that can justify a desponding inactivity.* The Word of God is full of exceeding great and precious promises, which shall all be fulfilled in their season, to those who rely upon them.

These precious promises:  
we should contemplate;  
we should treasure them up in our minds;  
we should plead them before God in prayer;  
we should expect assuredly the fulfillment of them.

However long or dark our night may be, we should look with confidence for the returning light of day; we should know, that "the goings forth of Jehovah" for the salvation of his people "are prepared as the morning;" and that he will appear at the appointed hour. However frequently vanquished by our spiritual foes, we should return to the charge, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." *We should never, for a moment, allow the thought of our weakness to discourage us; we should rather make it a reason for exertion, in the full confidence, that "when we are weak, then are we strong;" and that "God will perfect his strength in our weakness.*"

This is the very instruction which an inspired Apostle gives us, "Work out," says he, "your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, [Philippians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.12-13)."

The man with the withered hand is a fit example for us to follow. The command given him by our Lord was, "Stretch forth your hand." He did not indolently reply, 'I cannot; but immediately made an effort to comply; and, in the attempt, he was strengthened to perform the deed, [Matthew 12:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.13).

So would it be with us, if, in obedience to God's Word, and in dependence on his grace, we addressed ourselves to the duties which we have to perform, "our light would soon rise in obscurity, and our darkness be as the noon-day sun." The very exhibition of a lamp from a broken pitcher, if done in faith, should be sufficient to overcome the strongest foe, [Judges 7:16-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 7.16-21).

From God's reply to his complaining people we learn,

***~~II. That we should expect everything from God, as if there were no need of personal exertions.~~***

***~~Such was the instruction given to the Jews.~~***

Captives are accustomed to be redeemed with money. But what prospect had the Jews of being liberated from captivity on such terms as these? They were despoiled of everything; and had no friend to interpose in their behalf, and to pay a ransom for them. But, says God, "You have sold yourselves for nothing; and you shall be redeemed without money." Look back, and see: What did you ever gain by all the transgressions by which you provoked me to cast you off? Know then, that as you never received anything in return for your souls, so shall you never be called upon to give anything for the liberation of them.

This was specifically promised; and the very person who should liberate them was *proclaimed*by name three hundred years before any such person existed in the world! [Isaiah 44:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.28); [Isaiah 45:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.13). And it was *fulfilled*at the time predicted; yes, so literally fulfilled, that not only were they permitted to return to their native land, but means were afforded them for rebuilding their city and temple; and the vessels which had been taken away by the Chaldean monarch, were restored to them, for the service of the sanctuary, and the worship of their God, [2 Chronicles 36:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 36.22-23) and [Ezra 1:2-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 1.2-11).

In what precise manner their future restoration shall be accomplished, we do not exactly know; but we are sure that it shall "not be by price or reward" given to the various potentates who rule over them. No; it shall be in a way not less astonishing than their deliverance from Egypt or from Babylon; a way that shall leave no doubt, upon the minds of any, that the hand of the Lord has done it! verse 6. To this the whole nation may look forward with confidence; for "the mountains shall depart," says God, "and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you."

**Such, too, is the lesson that must be learned by us.**

"We have sold ourselves for nothing!" I will appeal to every one among you:

What have you ever gained by sin?

What has the world ever done for you?

What have you ever found in it, but "vanity and vexation of spirit?"

Truly it may be said of you also, that you have never received anything in return for your souls. To you also may it be said, that neither are you called to give anything for the redemption of your souls. The price has been already paid, even "the precious blood of God's only dear Son, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot! [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19)." All that remains for you is, to receive freely what your God so freely bestows! [Romans 3:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.24).

The proclamation has gone forth; it is already issued from the court of Heaven; the jubilee-trumpet has announced it long, "Shake yourselves from the dust; loose yourselves from the bands of your necks, you captive daughters of Zion;" return, every one, from your sore bondage, and take possession of your forfeited inheritance; receive all the blessings of salvation "freely, without money, and without price! [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

Do not sit, any of you, in a desponding frame, crying, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!"

But hear your God saying to you, "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and impure."

Complete deliverance is at hand, for all who truly desire it; for all who are willing to receive it. Do not imagine that it is any mark of humility to doubt; it is no virtue in you; but rather a grievous insult to your God. So God himself represents it, "Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint! [Isaiah 40:27-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-31)."

As for seeking to justify your despondency by any peculiarities in your state—it is all folly; it is all impiety; it is all a forgetfulness of God. "Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? But this is what the LORD says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save! [Isaiah 49:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-25)."

Do not fear, then, O desponding soul; but commit your cause to God; and know assuredly, that the more simple your trust is in him, and the more confident your expectation of his effectual help, the more speedy and manifest shall be his interpositions in your behalf. Only believe in him; and he will glorify himself in your complete and everlasting deliverance!

***~~#961~~***

***~~THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.7)~~***

KJV. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Your God reigns!"

NIV. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

***~~In order to understand the prophetic writings, we must always bear in mind that they have a spiritual or mystical sense, as well as a plain and literal one.~~***

The words before us, in their primary meaning, evidently refer to the joy with which the proclamation of Cyrus, when he permitted the captive Jews to return from Babylon to their native country, would be received.

But they also certainly relate to the deliverance announced to us under the Gospel-dispensation; for it is in this view that they are quoted by the Apostle Paul in [Romans 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.15). We shall take occasion from them to show,

**I. What the Gospel is.**

It is described with sufficient accuracy in the text.

***~~1. The Gospel is a proclamation of "peace and salvation" to man.~~***

The Gospel supposes men to have offended God by their sinfulness, and to be liable to his everlasting displeasure. It further supposes that they have no way of conciliating the Divine favor, or of warding off the stroke of his indignation. Coming to men in this helpless and hopeless state, the Gospel publishes tidings of peace and salvation; it represents sin as expiated by the sin-atoning blood of Jesus; and God as reconciled to all who will trust in his meritorious and all-prevailing sin-atoning sacrifice.

This is the view which Paul himself gives us of the Gospel; in preaching of which Gospel ministers resemble the messengers sent to Babylon, who had nothing to do but to proclaim a full and free deliverance to the wretched captives, [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.18-20).

***~~2. The Gospel is a declaration of Christ's power and grace.~~***

The Chaldeans, who so grievously oppressed their Jewish captives, may justly represent to us the bitter and tyrannical dominion of sin and Satan. And Cyrus, who, without fee or reward, liberated them from their bondage, may be considered as the agent and representative of God. As therefore the messengers would not fail to remind the Jews, that Cyrus, the one author of their happiness, would continue to them his protection and favor while they maintained their allegiance to him.

In the same way, in preaching the Gospel, we are to declare, that Christ, to whom we owe the *beginnings*of our liberty, will *complete*our deliverance, and *continue*to us all the tokens of his love—provided we yield him, as we are in duty bound, a willing and unreserved obedience. Thus did Christ himself preach the Gospel, saying: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Compare [Mark 1:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 1.14-15) with [Matthew 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.17).

If we view the Gospel in this light, we shall see immediately,

**II. That the Gospel is a ground of joy.**

By a beautiful figure, the very steps of the messenger hastening over the distant mountains are represented as inspiring us with joy. That the Gospel itself is a source of joy, appears in that:

***~~1. The Gospel has been considered so from the first moment of its promulgation.~~***

*Abraham*, two thousand years before its promulgation, rejoiced exceedingly in a distant prospect of it, [John 8:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.56).

At the birth of Jesus, our deliverer, a *host of angels* encouraged the world, saying, "Behold, we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord! [Luke 2:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.10-11)."

As soon as ever the full effects of the Gospel came to be experienced, the *new converts*, filled with every malignant character just before, were filled with joy, and "ate their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, blessing and praising God! [Acts 2:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.46-47)."

No sooner was the Gospel preached in *Samaria*, than "there was great joy in that city."

The instant that the *Ethiopian eunuch*had embraced the Gospel, "he went on his way rejoicing! [Acts 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.8); [Acts 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.39)."

Thus it is at *this day*a healing balm and a reviving cordial to all who understand and receive it.

***~~2. The Gospel is in itself well calculated to create joy in our hearts.~~***

Let but its blessings be *felt*—and it will be impossible not to rejoice.

Did the *Jews*exult at a deliverance from a cruel yoke, and a restoration to their native country? How much more must a sinner rejoice at his deliverance from death and Hell, and his restoration to the forfeited inheritance of Heaven!

The transports of joy manifested by the *cripple*whom Peter and John had healed, were the natural effusions of a grateful heart; we would have wondered if he had not so expressed the feelings of his soul, [Acts 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.8). But he had received no benefit in comparison with that which the believer enjoys when he first embraces the Gospel of Christ.

Hence our prophet represents the Gospel as invariably producing such sensations as the farmer feels when bringing home the fruits of the field, or the soldier when dividing the spoils of victory! [Isaiah 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.3); [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6).

***~~3. The Gospel is, and ever will be, the one subject of thanksgiving in the realms of glory!~~***

The glorified saints never have their attention diverted from it for one single moment! Day and night are they sing to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood! [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6); [Revelation 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.8); [Revelation 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9), [10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 7.10), [15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 7.15); [Revelation 22:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.3). And though the angels are less interested in this subject, because they never needed redeeming grace—yet do they join the general chorus, ascribing honor and glory to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever! Nor will they ever be weary of this subject, at the Gospel is such an inexhaustible storehouse of light, and happiness, and glory.

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. How strange is it that the Gospel should be treated with indifference!~~***

That it is so treated, needs no proof; but how amazing that it should ever be slighted by those to whom it is sent! Would condemned criminals should disregard the offers of pardon sent them by their prince? O that there might be no more occasion for that complaint, "Who has believed our report?" Let the very feet of the messengers who bring the tidings be henceforth beautiful in our eyes.

***~~2. Of what importance is it to distinguish between mere morality, and the Gospel of Christ!~~***

Lectures upon honesty would administer but little comfort to a person about to be executed for breaking the laws of his country. In the same way, mere discourses on morality will administer much comfort to a self-condemning sinner. If such a one mistakes discourses on morality for the Gospel—then he is fatally deceived!

The Gospel is a full and free offer of salvation through the sin-atoning blood of Christ; and this is glad tidings indeed; like "rivers of water in a dry place, or a shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

O that all who are ambassadors of God may remember the great scope of their ministry, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God! And let all who hear the joyful sound, improve the day of their visitation. Blessed are those who receive the Gospel in the love thereof. But most aggravated will be their condemnation if they despise the mercy so freely offered to them!

***~~#962~~***

***~~THE SAINT'S VISION OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.8)~~***

KJV. "They shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

NIV. "When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes!"

Exceedingly strong and animated are the descriptions given us, in the prophetic writings, respecting the return of the Jews from Babylon (read the first three verses of this chapter.) And in that event is God represented as to be preeminently glorified, verse 6 with chapter 60:21.

But we must not, in reading these glowing passages, confine our attention to that one event. We must bear in mind, that it was altogether a type of our deliverance by Christ. And we must therefore regard it in that view, comprehending under its vivid representations, that infinitely greater redemption which it was intended to prefigure.

In truth,*in order to understand the prophecies aright, we must remember that they contain, in general, a primary and a secondary sense:*

***~~primary, as having a literal fulfillment;~~***

***~~secondary, as having a mystical accomplishment under the Christian dispensation.~~***

By the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, God's glory was made to appear; but it was more clearly seen in the apostolic age; and will be yet more fully manifested at the latter day. Those periods, it is true, in respect of time, are far asunder; but in respect of purpose they are one; and may be considered, therefore, as declaring one great event in:  
its commencement,  
its progress,  
and its completion.

It is in that view that I enter upon the passage before us; from which I shall take occasion to show you,

***~~I. The views which men had of Christ under the Mosaic economy.~~***

***~~Certainly, under the Mosaic dispensation, their views of Christ were very indistinct.~~***

True it is, that Christ was then prefigured in his person, work, and offices. It may well be doubted whether there was so much as a pin in the tabernacle which did not correspond with something in Christ; or whether there was anything in Christ which was not prefigured; for God gave to Moses a model; and agreeably to "that pattern shown him in the mount," was everything made.

Still, however, *the Mosaic ritual was only a shadow; and, as a shadow will give but a very imperfect conception of a****man****, especially in his intellectual and moral powers. In the same way, did the laws of Moses give a very inadequate representation of****Christ****, and of the salvation which he was to work out for us.*

It was to intimate this, that Moses put a veil on his face when he spoke to the people under his charge, 2 Corinthians 3:13; and even the best informed of the prophets themselves were far from comprehending the full import of what they conveyed to us! [1 Peter 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.10); 1 Peter 1:12. Doubtless "Abraham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced in the sight, [John 8:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.56);" but still both he and all his posterity saw but little, in comparison with what was afterwards revealed to Moses and the prophets; and the prophets themselves, yes, and even John the Baptist, who was the greatest of them all—were inferior in knowledge to the least and lowest of the followers of Christ! [Matthew 11:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.11).

***~~The deliverance from Babylon added but little to the knowledge which the Law conveyed.~~***

That event indeed, duly considered, would serve to throw light upon our redemption by Christ; and more especially in the view in which it is foretold in the preceding context, "Thus says the Lord; You have sold yourselves for nothing; and you shall be redeemed without money, verse 3." And, as we shall see presently, it was intended to shadow forth that stupendous effort of God's mercy and love. But still, the temporal blessing that was then imparted, so occupied the minds of all who partook of it, as to swallow up every consideration of the spiritual benefits which the temporal deliverance was ordained to prefigure.

But men's views of Christ will be found greatly enlarged, if we consider,

***~~II. Those views of Christ which were given to them in the apostolic age.~~***

**The passage manifestly refers to that period.**

In the verse preceding our text, the prophet, seeing, as it were, his prediction already carried into effect, exclaims, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good; that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Your God reigns! verse 7." Paul quotes this very passage, as fulfilled under the Christian dispensation, by those who preach the Gospel of Christ! [Romans 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.15). This shows clearly, that the one event was typical of the other; and that we must look to the Christian dispensation for the accomplishment of the prediction before us.

Indeed, it is under the Christian dispensation alone that God does "bring again Zion" to the state from which it had fallen through the apostasies of his unbelieving and gainsaying people.

***~~Then was Christ seen, comparatively, "eye to eye," and face to face.~~***

He did assume our nature, and tabernacle among men. And though his appearance was lowly, even like "a root out of a dry ground, [Isaiah 53:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.2)," yet to a chosen few he revealed himself in a more especial manner, as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person! [Hebrews 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.3)."

On one occasion he was transfigured before them, "shining forth as the sun" in its meridian luster, [Matthew 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.2); to which event Peter refers, when he says, "We were eye-witnesses of his Majesty! 2 Peter 1:16." Indeed, his disciples generally "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, [John 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.14)." Not that they fully understood his character and mission, until the day of Pentecost; but when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, then they saw him to be indeed "the Son of God, the Savior of the world! [1 John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.14)."

They had seen him, and conversed familiarly with him after his resurrection, for the space of forty days; and had now received the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit; so that there remained no longer any doubt upon their minds. Hence John, speaking of him as the incarnate "Word," the eternal Son of God, says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life …. that which we have seen and heard, we declare unto you …. And these things we write unto you, that your joy may be full! [1 John 1:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.1-4)."

How clear their knowledge was, in comparison with that which men possessed under the Mosaic economy, will be seen to advantage by reading the Epistle to the Hebrews; where the whole of his work and offices, as depicted in the ceremonial law, is fully developed and explained. Hence, then, it was justly said by Paul, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him—but God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit! [1 Corinthians 2:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9-10)."

We must however, for the full understanding of the text and views which are there spoken of, we must, I say, look forward to,

***~~III. Those which shall be enjoyed in the latter day.~~***

***~~To this period our text has a still further reference.~~***

Doubtless many of the Jews were converted to Christ, and many of the Gentiles also, through the ministry of the Apostles. But the bulk of the Jewish nation rejected their testimony, as did the great mass also of the Gentile world; so that Zion still needs to be "brought again," no less than at the first promulgation of Christianity. It cannot yet be said that "the Lord has made bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, and that all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God, verse 10." But that period shall arrive, as the prophet has said; and then only shall my text be fully accomplished.

***~~Then, indeed, shall men behold our Lord "eye to eye".~~***

Some have thought that Christ will appear again personally upon earth, and be seen among his followers. Certainly, if that should be, our text will then receive a most remarkable accomplishment. But without determining anything respecting that, one thing is clear; namely, there will be a vast increase of light bestowed upon the Church in that day; insomuch, that "the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

We know that there is a veil upon our hearts when we read the Word and attend upon God's ordinances; and that, for the most part, it is on some particular occasions alone that Christ appears to us in his glory, and manifests himself to us in all the wonders of his love. But in that day this will be a common occurrence among all the members of his Church; for "the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea! [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14)."

So glorious will be the discoveries given to them, that "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord Almighty shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously, [Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23)." Then shall be fulfilled what John has spoken in the book of Revelation, "There shall be no more curse in the Church; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light; and they shall reign forever and ever! [Revelation 22:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.3-5)."

***~~And now let me ask,~~***

***~~1. What views of Christ have you?~~***

The apostle Paul speaks of Christ as "revealed in him, [Galatians 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.16);" and such is the revelation which we also must have, if ever we would partake of his saving benefits. That he has been revealed to us in the Word, will only tend to our heavier condemnation, if "an understanding is not given us that we may know him;" and a vital power also communicated, "that we may be in him," as branches of the living vine! [1 John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.20).

O do not rest in a mere head-knowledge of the Savior; but beg of God that he would pour out upon you the Holy Spirit, as "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, [Ephesians 1:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.17-18)," you may know him in all "his excellency and glory, [Isaiah 35:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.2)."

It is the Spirit's office to glorify Christ; and to take of the things that are his, and to "show them unto you, [John 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14)." Beg therefore, without ceasing, that God, of his infinite mercy, would give you his Holy Spirit, and, through his divine agency—impart to you that "knowledge of Christ in which alone consists eternal life! [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.3)."

***~~2. What effect has your knowledge of Christ produced upon you?~~***

From my text we may learn, that, in proportion as we see Christ "eye to eye," we may hope, both in our individual and collective capacity, to be restored to God. And to the same effect says Paul, "We all, with open and unveiled face, beholding as in a looking-glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord! [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)."

Now what do you know of this experience? It is not the Law, with its terrors, that can ever effect this. Neither can a desire of Heaven give us a sufficient stimulus, or obtain for us so rich a benefit. *Nothing but a continuous sight of Christ can transform the soul into his likeness!*Even in Heaven this assimilating efficacy is felt and acknowledged; for there we "shall be like him, because we shall *see*him as he is! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2)."

Study, then, I beg you, his glorious character; survey him diligently, as he is revealed in the Word; and cease not to contemplate the wonders of his love, until, "by comprehending the breadth and length and depth and height of it," as far as such an incomprehensible subject can be known, "you are filled with all the fullness of God! [Ephesians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.18-19)."

***~~#963~~***

***~~CHRIST REWARDED FOR HIS SERVICES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.13)~~***

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently. He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

In the writings of Moses, the enjoyment of the land of Canaan was held forth as the great incentive to obedience; and spiritual blessings were but obscurely intimated. But in the prophetic writings, the greatest of temporal blessings were promised rather as pledges of infinitely richer benefits, which they typically represented; and frequently the very language in which they were promised, clearly showed that their mystical sense was, in fact, the most literal.

Sometimes, as in the prophecy before us, the inspired writer entirely loses sight of all temporal considerations, and is wholly enrapt up in the contemplation of that spiritual kingdom, which the Messiah was in due season to erect. From the redemption of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, he goes on to speak of a more glorious redemption to be effected for all the nations of the world from the dominion of sin and Satan, of death and Hell. The means of its accomplishment are described at large from this verse to the end of the following chapter.

The Messiah, by whom it was to be effected, is set forth in all that variety of character which he was to assume, and in those diversified states of humiliation and glory which he was to pass through, in order to fulfill the work assigned to him. That a passage so decisive for the establishment of Christianity should be wrested by the Jews, and be applied to anyone rather than to Christ, is nothing more than what might be expected. But so harsh and incongruous are their interpretations, that they need only to be stated, and the absurdity of them immediately appears. Besides, the numerous applications of this prophecy to Christ, which occur in the New Testament, leave us no room to doubt respecting its true import. The portion, which now demands our attention, declares to us:

***~~I. The success with which Christ executed the work assigned him.~~***

The office which Christ sustained was that of a "servant." He was to do his Father's will, to seek his Father's glory, and to advance the interests of his Father's kingdom. On this account the Scriptures frequently speak of him as a servant, "Behold my servant whom I uphold;" "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;" "I will bring forth my servant the Branch, [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 42.1); [Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11) and [Zechariah 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.8)."

Our Lord himself also often speaks of himself under this character, "I have not spoken of myself, says he, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, [John 12:49](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.49)." In above thirty other passages in John's gospel he represents himself as sent by the Father, and as receiving a commandment from him. We must not, however, conceive from hence that he is only a creature; for though in his official capacity he was inferior to the Father, in his own nature he was equal to the Father, as Paul tells us, "He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, [Philippians 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.6-7)."

Christ's work as a servant was to reveal the Father's will to mankind, to make atonement for their sins, and to reduce them to a state of holy obedience. Or, in other words, to execute the offices of a prophet, a priest, and a king, in compliance with the Father's appointment, and in subservience to his honor.

Now that he delivered his doctrines in the capacity of a servant, is evident from his own repeated confessions, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." "Whatever I speak, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak, [John 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.16); [John 12:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.50)."

It was also in obedience to his Father's will that he offered himself a sacrifice for sin. Our Lord himself says, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again; no man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this commandment I have received from the Father, [John 10:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.17-18)."

And Paul also says, that "being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! [Philippians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.8)." Thus also in the manifold exercises of his regal power, whether he cured diseases, rectified abuses, or forgave sins—he acted by an authority delegated to him for that purpose. When, at the very beginning of his ministry he took the sacred volume into his hands to read out of it to the people in the synagogue, he selected this passage, which fully declared to them by what authority he acted, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted!" At another time he told his disciples, that "the Father had appointed unto him a kingdom." Thus plain it is, that *whether he executed the office of a prophet, priest, or king—he acted in the capacity of a servant*.

In the whole of his work he prospered. The text says, "My servant shall deal prudently;" but in the margin of the Bible it is put, "shall prosper." This rendering of the Word seems rather better to agree with the context, and with that expression in the following chapter, "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." The very same word also is used in reference to Christ by Jeremiah, where our translators have given this sense to it, "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, [Jeremiah 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.5)."

Let us view this servant of Jehovah in the various offices he performed, and we shall see that he prospered in them all.

Was he teaching the people? Behold, what wonderful things he brought to light; things, which from eternity had been hidden in the bosom of the Father!

How did the clouds of ignorance and superstition vanish before him!

The corrupt glosses, with which the Jewish doctors had obscured the law, were refuted.

The truths of God were established on the firmest basis.

The most subtle objectors were put to silence.

The most ignorant were instructed in the deepest mysteries.

And all, with such condescension, such ease, such wisdom, and such authority, that his very enemies were constrained to say, "Never has any man spoken like this man!"

Was he setting up his kingdom? He rejected with disdain the pomp of earthly monarchs, and laid the foundations of his throne in the hearts of his people. Nor did he bring any into subjection by outward force—a single word was sufficient to subdue the stoutest heart!

If he said to Matthew, "Follow me," not all the wealth of kingdoms could detain the willing captive.

If he said, "Come down, Zaccheus," behold, a covetous extortioner is instantly transformed into a benevolent and obedient servant.

Whoever he would, he effectually called to himself. Such his constraining power, that, without hesitation, they left all that they had, and followed him! And though he commanded his subjects to make no account even of their own lives when standing in competition with his will, and promised them nothing but poverty and persecution in this world—yet they all delighted to be his followers, and gloried in the cross for his sake. So entirely did they yield up themselves to him, that opposition served but to rivet their affections to him, and to confirm them in their determination to live and die in his service.

Did he expiate the sins of his elect people? Behold, there was not anything lacking either to complete his obedience, or to fill up the measure of his sufferings. He "fulfilled all righteousness," even though by so doing he made himself appear to be a sinner like unto us; he not only was circumcised by his parents, but voluntarily submitted to the ordinance of baptism, as though he had needed it for the washing away of his own iniquities. Nor was there any kind of suffering which he did not endure, that he might fully expiate our guilt by bearing in our stead all that our sins had merited. He never ceased from his labors, until he could say in reference to all that he had undertaken to do or suffer for us, "It is finished!"

But must we confine our views of his success to past or future times? Are there not many *living*witnesses of his power and grace? Is he not teaching some among us by his Spirit, and "revealing unto babes the things that are hidden from the wise and prudent?" Do not many of us also experience the virtue of his sin-atoning blood, and reap the fruits of his continual intercession? Is not his almighty arm yet stretched out to deliver us from our spiritual enemies, and to bring our hearts into captivity to his will? Wherever there is one who is brought out of darkness into marvelous light, one who enjoys peace with God through the blood of sprinkling, and whose corruptions are mortified through the influence of divine truth—there is a monument of our Lord's success, "an epistle of Christ known and read of all men!"

We might further illustrate his success by enumerating the benefits which his mediation has procured; but as these constituted a part of that reward which was conferred on him, we shall wave the mention of them in this place, and proceed to consider,

***~~II. The recompense that was awarded him for his fidelity.~~***

Our Lord, as a servant, "had respect unto the recompense of reward;" "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame." Nor was this reward withheld from him, when he had finished his work. Paul tells us expressly, that his resurrection and consequent ascension are to be regarded in this view, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God has highly exalted him." Of this also the prophet spoke in the words before us, "he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." Whether the prophet meant to point out three different steps of our Lord's advancement, we cannot positively say; but his words may well bear that interpretation:

"he shall be exalted" by *God*to a throne of glory,  
"he shall be extolled" by *men*with adoration and thanksgiving;  
and he shall "be very high," reigning as Head over men and angels forever and ever.

In this view, his advancement may be considered as *immediate*, *progressive*, and *final*.

1. His immediate advancement consisted in his resurrection from the dead, and his elevation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, according to what is said by the Apostle, "God has highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." He, who left his glory for our good, resumed it again; and his human nature is made to participate in his glory.

Yes, that very **body**, which endured fatigue and hunger, which was torn with scourges, and pierced with nails, which agonized in the garden, and expired on the cross—is now at the right hand of God in the highest seat of dignity and honor!

That human **soul**also, that once was harassed with the temptations of Satan, and that endured the wrath of a sin-avenging God—is now assumed into such a union with the godhead, as to be exalted infinitely above the highest archangel! It is in his human nature that the brightest effulgence of God is seen; so that, while he appears as a lamb that has been slain—he is the very joy and glory of Heaven, the sun that illumines the regions of the blessed, "the glory of God does lighten them, and the Lamb is the light thereof!"

And who does not rejoice that the Savior should be thus glorified? Who does not even leap for joy at the thought, that he who loved us unto death, should be thus exalted far above all principalities and powers? Surely, independent of the interest which we ourselves have in his advancement, we ought to be exceedingly glad that our greatest friend and benefactor should be thus gloriously rewarded.

2. The next, and more remote step of his advancement was, the progressive extending of his kingdom throughout the earth. It is true that, in a very short space of time, there were thousands of souls subjected to his dominion; and gradually his empire was enlarged among the Gentile world; multitudes in every place took, as it were, an oath of allegiance to him, and were made willing even to lay down their lives for his sake.

But yet his kingdom has hitherto been only partially established; there is a time coming when, in the most literal sense, that prophecy of Daniel shall be accomplished, and "there shall be given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom; and all people, nations, and languages shall serve him."

This methinks is that prospect, to which our Lord looked forward, with peculiar delight as to "the joy set before him." When he shall see the whole human race bowing before his footstool, and hear them "extolling" and magnifying his name, he will look back upon the travail of his soul with pleasure and satisfaction, and account himself amply recompensed for all that he has done and suffered.

O that this glorious season might speedily begin; that his kingdom might come, and his will be done on earth as it is in Heaven! But if we are not favored to behold this period—then let us at least make him the most acceptable return we can for his kindness, by devoting ourselves to his service, and endeavoring to bring others to the obedience of faith.

3. The final step of his advancement will be when he shall come again to judge the world, and reign over his elect forever and ever! What he has already received is only a pledge of what he will hereafter enjoy. At a future period, fixed in the divine counsels, but known to no creature either in Heaven or earth—he is to come in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, surrounded with all the holy angels. He is then to summon the whole universe before him; all, in one vast assembly, will stand at his tribunal, and be judged by him according to their works.

Those who were his *enemies*, and would not that he should reign over them, he will cast, together with the fallen angels, into the lake of fire! But his *faithful servants*he will take, together with the holy angels, to dwell with him, that they may be one fold under one shepherd forevermore!

He will then lay down his mediatorial office indeed, as having no more need to exercise it; and in this sense, "he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all."

But he will not cease to reign as a king over his people; for the prophet expressly says, that "of his kingdom there shall be no end." To all eternity therefore he will be the Head of the church! To all eternity he will be the one source of their joy, and the one object of their adoration.

As the glorified saints and angels are already singing, so will they never cease to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and glory and honor and blessing; therefore blessing and honor, and glory and power be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!"

**In improving this subject**, we shall find abundant matter:  
of reproof to the ungodly,  
of encouragement to the humble,  
and of direction to all.

***~~1. Reproof to the ungodly.~~***

On the most diligent inquiry into the life and conduct of our Lord, we shall find that he omitted nothing that was necessary for the effecting of our reconciliation with God. Yet how ill is he requited by the generality of mankind? Notwithstanding he has come down from Heaven for our salvation, and accomplished the work which had been given him to do, the ungodly world will scarcely bestow a thought upon him. Instead of "exalting" him in their minds, and "extolling" him with their lips, and setting him "very high" in their affections, they regard him little more, than if all that is related of him were a mere fable! Every earthly vanity can fix their attention, and engage their favor; but he, whose condescension and grace have filled all Heaven with wonder, can attract no notice! What base ingratitude is this on the part of man! What is it but practically to deny the Redeemer's excellency, and to frustrate, as far as in us lies, the purposes of God respecting him? It is, in fact, to say that, whatever reward God has decreed to give him for his services—he shall receive no part of it from us.

And who among us has not been guilty of this conduct?

Who has not passed months and years without any admiration of his love, any zeal for his honor?

If he were as much forgotten by all, as he has been by the generality, his very name would soon be put out of remembrance! What more awful proof of our fallen nature can we have! What greater evidence of our apostasy from God! "If God were our Father, we would love Christ; if we were true believers, he would be precious to our souls."

And if God has said that "all who forget him shall be turned into Hell," shall our forgetfulness of his dear Son involve us in no danger? Is it without reason that the Apostle asks, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?" Surely if we do not exalt him willingly, he shall be exalted against our will; for "he will reign, until he has put every enemy under his feet." If we will not bow to the scepter of his grace, we shall be broken in pieces with the rod of his indignation.

***~~2. Encouragement to the humble.~~***

They who are humbly endeavoring to serve God, may, on the other hand, derive from this subject much comfort and encouragement. As Christ was, so are all his followers, servants of the most high God. Like him too, in spite of men and devils, they prosper in their work. And is there no reward prepared for them? Shall they not, like him, be exalted to thrones of glory? Shall they not be extolled by *men*, as the excellent of the earth; and by *God*, as good and faithful servants? Shall they not be very high, even "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ?" Yes! God is not ashamed to be called their God; and, as soon as they have overcome, they shall be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, and inherit the glory prepared for them.

Let the believer then look forward to the recompense of reward. Let him rest assured that the felicity which awaits him will abundantly compensate his labors and sufferings in the pursuit of it.

Let him "be faithful unto death, and God will give him a crown of life."

In the meantime, however, they who expect the *wages*, must be careful to execute the *work*assigned them. They must "deal prudently," that they may prosper; and "prosper," that they may obtain the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give them.

But it is not in their own strength that they are to proceed, but in the strength of their exalted Savior—of him, who, having endured the same trials, can *sympathize*with them; and, having all power in Heaven and in earth committed to him, can *support*them. To him then let every eye be directed; to him, in whom all fullness is deposited, and our life itself is hidden; and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory!"

***~~3. Direction to all.~~***

While the words before us prophetically declare what Christ shall receive as the reward of his labors, they serve as a direction to every one that names the name of Christ; they virtually enjoin us to pay him the tribute which is so justly due. "What shall I render unto the Lord," was the reflection that inspired the bosom of *David*on a review of the mercies which he had experienced.

And can *we*call to mind what our blessed Lord has done, and is yet doing, for our salvation, and not feel the liveliest emotions of gratitude in our hearts? Are we not constrained to break forth in the language of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless his holy name?" Yes, "let us abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, and sing of his praise without ceasing."

It is the most reasonable, and surely the most delightful, of all duties to exalt his name, and magnify it with thanksgiving. Let this then be the disposition of our minds, and the practice of our lives. Let us say, "Awake my glory, awake lute and harp, I myself will awake right early." "I will sing of his righteousness all the day long." "I will praise his name while I have my being." Then, at whatever period we shall be summoned into his immediate presence, we*shall change our place, but not our employment*; for the song, which we began on earth, shall be continued by us to all eternity, "To him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, and the Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen."

***~~#964~~***

***~~THE DEPTH OF OUR SAVIOR'S HUMILIATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.14-15)~~***

KJV. "As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider."

NIV. "Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand!"

Of all the subjects that ever engaged the attention of the human mind, there is none so important as that which the prophet is now opening:  
the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament are full of it;  
it was exhibited in the first promise that was given to man after his fall;  
it was continued from that period with increasing clearness in the prophecies;  
it was set before the eyes of men in the sacrifices that were offered;  
and memorials of it are yet preserved in all Christian churches in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Our *Lord Jesus*frequently introduced it in his discourses; it was the one topic of conversation when he talked with Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration.

The *Apostles*in their sermons and epistles represent it as the foundation of all their hopes.

*Paul*found it to be such an irresistible weapon, and so mighty to destroy the strong holds of sin and Satan, that he determined to know nothing among his people but Jesus Christ and him crucified!

This is that mystery, in which are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is so extensive a field for meditation, that, though we traverse it ever so often, we need never resume the same track; and it is such a marvelous fountain of blessedness to the soul, that, if we have ever drank of its refreshing streams, we shall find none other so pleasant to our taste; or rather, we shall never wish to taste any other!

To the consideration of this subject, we are immediately led by the words before us, in which we may observe both our Lord's unparalleled humiliation, and the ends for which he submitted to it.

**I. Christ's unparalleled humiliation.**

In order to mark this the more distinctly, we will briefly notice the different steps of it from his cradle to his grave. Notwithstanding he was the Creator of the universe, he had no fitter place for his reception than a stable, no better accommodation than a feeding trough; nor had he long made his appearance in the world before his life was sought, and he was driven as a fugitive from his native country. Until the age of thirty his occupation was that of a carpenter, at which business he worked with his reputed father. And during the last four years of his life, nothing could exceed the contempt and ignominy with which he was treated. He was called a deceiver, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard; he was said to be in league with Satan himself; and the people thought they spoke well and properly concerning him, when they said, "He has a devil, and is mad!" [John 8:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.48). Yes, they even called him Beelzebub, the prince of the devils [Matthew 10:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 10.25).

But, most of all, when the time of his crucifixion drew near, then all ranks of people seemed to vie with each other in insulting him. They arrayed him in mock majesty with a purple robe, a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a scepter. They spit on him, they smote him, they plucked off his beard, according to that prediction, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who plucked off my hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting [Isaiah 50:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.6)."

Nor was this the conduct of a few only; for he was universally execrated; he was considered as "a worm and no man, the very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people;" he was "one whom men despised, and whom the nation abhorred." Having loaded him with all manner of indignities, and "plowed up his back with scourges, so as to make long furrows" in it, they nailed him to the cross, and left him to hang there, until exhausted nature should sink under the torments inflicted on him.

But, as others of mankind have been called to endure many things, let us particularly notice wherein his sufferings were unparalleled; for it is certain that "his visage was marred more than any man's." And here we shall find that both in *variety*and *intenseness*, his sufferings infinitely surpassed all that ever were sustained by any human being.

Note the VARIETY of his sufferings:

In his civil state, as a member of society, he was degraded so low, that even a murderer was preferred before him.

In his natural state, as a man, he was eminently distinguished above all the human race as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He suffered much in his body, from labors, watchings, fastings; from the lack even of a place where to lay his head; from the wounds made in it from head to foot, by the thorns, the scourges, and the nails. We may judge of this by what is said of him in the Psalms, "Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me! [Psalm 22:12-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.12-17)."

The troubles of his soul were yet greater still. Of these he himself frequently complained, "Now is my soul troubled; my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." To such a degree was he agitated by internal conflicts, that, before he was even apprehended by his enemies—he was in an agony, and sweat great drops of blood from every pore of his body.

Moreover, as his sufferings were thus various, so did they also spring from a variety of sources: from men, from devils, and from God himself.

Men labored to the utmost to torment him by calumnies and reproaches, by taunts and revilings, and by all the cruelties that the most inveterate malice could devise and execute.

Satan assaulted him with fiery temptations in the wilderness; and all the powers of darkness conflicted with him at the close of life.

His heavenly Father hid his face from him in the hour of his greatest extremity, and "bruised him" for the iniquities of his people, and called forth the sword of vengeance to slay "the man who was his fellow! [Zechariah 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.7)."

Note the INTENSENESS of his sufferings:

In drinking this bitter cup, he found nothing to mitigate his sorrows, but everything to aggravate them to the uttermost. If we except the sympathy of a few women, he met with nothing but scorn and contempt from all who beheld him. Not even his beloved disciples afforded him any comfort; on the contrary, he was betrayed by one, denied by another, and forsaken by all. All orders and degrees of men were alike inveterate and devoid of mercy towards him.

Of this he himself complains by the prophet, "I looked for some to take pity on me, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none; they gave me also gall to drink, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink, [Psalm 69:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 69.20-21)."

When, in the depth of his dereliction he cried, "My God, my God! why have you forsaken me?"—so far from pitying him, they, with unexampled cruelty, played or punned, as it were, upon his words, and mocked him as idolatrously calling upon Elijah, instead of upon God. And when he complained of thirst, they gave him vinegar to increase his anguish, instead of a draught calculated to assuage it.

Nor did he receive consolation from God, any more than pity from men. On the contrary, his heavenly Father now hid his face from him, and thereby extorted from him that bitter complaint which we have just recited.

The united efforts of men and devils could not shake his constancy; but the hidings of his Father's face seemed more than he could endure—so painful was it to find an estrangement there, where he could alone look for comfort and support.

There were many things also which concurred to aggravate his sufferings beyond measure. It is probable that the perfection of his nature rendered him more susceptible of pain than other men; but however this might be, certainly his zeal for God must have given a tenfold poignancy to all his anguish.

Consider that immaculate Lamb tempted by Satan to distrust his Father's care, and turn the stones into bread for his support; then to presume upon his Father's care, and cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple; and then to deny his Father altogether, and to worship the devil in preference to him—how horrible must such suggestions be to his holy soul!

Peculiar stress is laid on this by the Apostle, who says, "He suffered, being tempted;" and we are told, he was so distressed by the conflict, that an angel was sent from Heaven to strengthen him. The dereliction also before mentioned, must have been afflictive in proportion to the regard which he bore towards his heavenly Father. His love for men must also have been a source of inconceivable trouble to his mind. If "*Lot*vexed his righteous soul from day to day;" and *David*had "rivers of waters running down his eyes;" and *Isaiah*exclaimed, "Look away from me, I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me;" and *Jeremiah*cried, "I am pained at my very heart;" on account of the ungodliness they beheld, and the consequences they foresaw—then what must *Jesus*have felt when he saw, not only the wickedness of men's actions, but all the enmity of their hearts against God, and knew the full extent of those judgments which were soon to come upon them? How must:  
the pride of the Pharisees,  
the unbelief of the Sadducees,  
the cruelty of the Herodians,  
and the stupidity of his own disciples  
—wound his soul!

The foresight which he had of his own sufferings must have been a still further aggravation of them. In many instances the expectation of pain is even worse than the pain itself; what then must he have endured, when, from the very beginning, he foresaw everything that would come upon him! To complete the whole, the accumulation of all his sorrows at once must have added so greatly to their weight, that, if he had not been God as well as man, he could never have sustained the load!

See then whether "the visage of any man was ever so marred as his?"

Others, if they have been tried in body, have had comfort in their soul.

Or if they have been persecuted by man, they have received support from God.

Or if their trials have been of a diversified nature, still they have found some to commiserate, and, by a tender sympathy at least, to participate their lot.

But Jesus trod the wine-press of God's wrath alone, and drank, even to the dregs, that cup of bitterness, which the sins of men had prepared for him, and which could not be removed consistently with God's honor and man's salvation!

Well therefore may we put into his mouth those words of the prophet, "Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger! [Lamentations 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 1.12)."

Well too, as the text observes, might "many be astonished at him;" for whether we consider the *innocence*of him on whom these sufferings were inflicted, or the *greatness*of him who submitted to them, or his *meekness*and *patience*in enduring them—we are equally lost in wonder and astonishment.

Upon a view of our Lord's unparalleled humiliation, we are naturally led to inquire into:

***~~II. The end for which Jesus submitted to his unparalleled humiliation.~~***

Moses, speaking of the truths which he was inspired to proclaim, says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; because I will publish the name of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.2)."

By a similar figure "the sprinkling of the nations" may be understood as relating to the publication of the Gospel to the whole world. And surely this was, in a general view, the end for which our Savior died.

But the term "sprinkling" alludes more particularly to the sprinklings which were made under the law. These were sometimes of blood, as when the mercy-seat was sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats on the great day of annual expiation, [Leviticus 16:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 16.15). Sometimes the sprinkling was of water, as when a person ceremonially impure was purified from his defilement by water of separation, [Numbers 19:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 19.13). Sometimes the sprinkling was both of water and blood, as when the leper was cleansed by the blood of a bird mixed with running water, [Leviticus 14:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 14.6-7). To all of these there is a reference in the text; and from these ceremonial observances, especially as they are more fully opened to us in the New Testament, we learn distinctly the ends of the Redeemer's sufferings.

**He suffered, first, that he might purge us from the *guilt*of sin by his blood.** To this the inspired writers bear witness with one consent. They declare that he was a atoning sacrifice for our sins; that we are reconciled to God by his death, and that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins! Even the saints that are in Heaven are represented as singing praises to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and as ascribing their salvation wholly to the Lamb that was slain.

Behold then, you who are bowed down under a sense of guilt; draw near to Calvary, and see the provision made for your salvation. God had ordained, that without shedding of blood there should be no remission; and behold, here is the blood of that spotless Lamb once offered for you on the cross. Take of this by faith, and sprinkle it on your hearts and consciences; and you shall find it effectual to cleanse from sins of the deepest die. The true Christian is characterized by the Apostle as having "come to the blood of sprinkling [Hebrews 12:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.24)." Let us then answer to this character; so shall we be protected from the sword of the destroying angel, [Hebrews 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.28), and sing forever the song of Moses, and possess the white and spotless robes in which the redeemed are arrayed before the throne of God, [Revelation 7:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.14-15).

**The other end of Christ's suffering was, that he might cleanse us from the *power*and *pollution*of sin by his Spirit.** It had been promised by the prophet, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you, [Ezekiel 36:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25)." And it was to procure this benefit for us, that Christ submitted to his sufferings, "He gave himself for us," says the Apostle, "that he might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water, by the Word, that he might present us to himself holy and without blemish! [Ephesians 5:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.25-27)." Let us then draw near to him, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

"Since he bore our sins in his own body, on purpose that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness," let us not be unmindful of our duty and our privilege. Let us seek "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit," and labor to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

It is of great importance to observe, that though, under the law, these two kinds of sprinkling were often separated, they are invariably united under the Gospel. John particularly notices, that "Christ came by *water*and *blood*; not by water only, but by water and blood, [1 John 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.6)." By this we understand, that the water and blood, which flowed in one united stream from the wounded side of the Redeemer, were significant of the united blessings which we should receive from him, namely:  
of justification by his blood,  
and sanctification by his Spirit.

And Peter expressly declares, that these ends were united in the eternal counsels of God, by whom we were "elected through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, [1 Peter 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.2)." What God therefore has joined together, let us never presume to separate; for, as there is no "redemption but by the blood" of Jesus, so "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The connection between these blessings, and the means used for the procuring of them, is frequently mentioned in the ensuing chapter, and therefore need not be insisted on in this place. Suffice it therefore at present to say, that the sprinkling of the nations is the fruit and consequence of our Lord's astonishing, unparalleled humiliation. Neither could he have had a right to communicate salvation, if he had not first suffered for our sins; nor can we enjoy his salvation, unless we receive it as the purchase of his blood.

***~~To CONCLUDE.~~***

The blessings mentioned in the text were not procured for one nation only, but for "many," even for all, to the remotest ends of the earth. And as no nation is excluded, so neither is any individual in any nation. The fountain is opened for all; and will cleanse from sin and impurity all who wash in it. As "Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled all the people, [Hebrews 9:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 9.19)," so now may every sinner in the universe have his heart and conscience sprinkled through faith in God's promises.

None can say, 'I am too vile; the blood of Christ can never cleanse from such guilt as mine!' Nor can they say, 'My lusts are so inveterate, that the Spirit of Christ can never purify my polluted heart!" For, "if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sanctified, in any instance, to the purifying of the flesh, much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge, in every instance, our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

***~~#965~~***

***~~THE MEANS AND EVIDENCE OF CONVERSION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 52:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.15)~~***

"So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they *see*; and that which they had not heard shall they *consider*."

Many are advocates for the preaching of *morality*in preference to the unfolding of the mysteries of the Gospel, because they think that men will be more easily influenced by what they know and understand, than by anything which surpasses their comprehension. But to judge thus is to be wiser than God, who has commanded his Gospel to be preached to all nations, and has appointed it as the means of converting the world unto himself. The most wonderful effects have been produced by it, not only on the vulgar, who might be thought open to deception, but on people of the most cultivated minds, and most extensive influence. From the first promulgation of the Gospel to the present moment, events have justified the prediction before us; for "kings," on hearing of a crucified Savior, have "shut their mouths before him," and acknowledged him as the foundation of all their hopes.

The terms in which this prophecy is expressed will lead us to consider:

The means of conversion.

The fruit and evidence of of conversion.

***~~I. The means of conversion.~~***

God is not limited to the use of any means. He, who by a word brought the universe into existence, can, with a simple act of his will, produce any change in the state and condition of his creatures, or do whatever pleases him. Nevertheless he has appointed a method of converting souls to the knowledge of himself; and though we presume not to say what changes he may effect in the minds of unenlightened heathen—yet we have no reason to expect that he will dispense with the means where he has sent the light of his Gospel. The means which God has appointed for the conversion of men may be considered either as external or internal:  
the external is, the preaching of the Gospel;  
the internal is, the seeing and considering of that Gospel.

With respect to the external means of conversion, the prophet speaks of it as "that which kings had not heard." He has just intimated that the sufferings of the Messiah should exceed all that ever were experienced by man; but that, at the same time, they should avail for the expiating of our guilt, and the purifying of our souls from sin.

He then adds, that the great and mighty of the earth should he made to consider these glad tidings; and that, after some opposition for a season, they should become the willing subjects of the Messiah's kingdom.

In this way Paul himself understood the words of our text; for he quotes them exactly in this sense, "So have I strived," says he, "to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard, shall understand! [Romans 15:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.20-21)."

And, indeed, this is a very just description of the Gospel; for, the productions of human wisdom were open to the view of kings; but the Gospel was far out of their sight; it was "a mystery hidden in the bosom of the Father from the foundation of the world."

This was the weapon which the apostles used in their warfare. They preached Christ in every place; Jesus and the resurrection were their constant theme; and so effectual did Paul find it for the conversion of men, that "he determined to know nothing, and to preach nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The same must be the constant tenor of our ministrations; there is no other subject that we can insist upon with equal effect. *Philosophy*leaves men as it finds them; it may afford some glimmering light to their minds; but it can never influence their hearts. Nothing can pull down the strong holds of sin, but that which points out a refuge for sinners!

But besides this external means of conversion there is another no less necessary, the operation of which is altogether internal. Many hear the Gospel, and, instead of receiving benefit from it, have only their latent enmity brought forth, and their hearts made more obdurate. To feel its full effect, we must "see and consider it."

There are many things of which we may have but dark and confused views without sustaining any loss; but in our views of the Gospel we should be clear. Our minds must be enlightened to see the ends and reasons of Christ's death. To know the fact *that*Jesus suffered, will be of no more use than any other historical knowledge.

We must know *why*he suffered.

We must know what necessity there was for his coming in the flesh.

We must know what was the need of his atonement.

We must know what was the virtue of his sacrifice.

It is not necessary indeed that we should be able to descant upon these subjects for the instruction of others; but *we must have such an experimental knowledge of them as leads us to renounce every false ground of hope, and to rely on Christ alone for the salvation of our souls*. We must so discern their excellence, as to be induced to "consider" them; to consider the death of Christ as the only sacrifice for sin; and to consider a saving interest in the Gospel as the only means for salvation.

*If we are genuinely converted to God, then Christ has become our meditation and delight. The height and depth, and length and breadth of his unsearchable love will occupy our minds, and inflame our hearts with love to him.*Nor is it in our first conversion only, but in every subsequent period of our lives, that we must thus have respect to his sin-atoning death. In all our approaches to God we must come, pleading the merits of the Redeemer's blood, and trusting only in his all-sufficient atonement. It is this alone that will preserve our souls in peace, or enable us to manifest to others,

**II. The fruit and evidence of true conversion.**

The hearts of men are the same in all ages; and the effects produced on them by the Gospel are the same; the very first fruit and evidence of our conversion by it is, that our "mouths are shut at, or before the Lord Jesus."

First, with respect to the vindicating of ourselves. Natural men, according to the external advantages they have enjoyed, will acknowledge more or less the depravity of their hearts. But, whatever difference there may be in their outward confessions, there is very little in their inward convictions. *All entertain a favorable opinion of themselves*; they cannot sincerely, and with the full consent of their minds, acknowledge their just desert of God's wrath! They have some hidden reserves; they secretly think that God would be unjust if he were to condemn them; they cannot persuade themselves that their iniquities merit so severe a doom. They pretend to hope in God's mercy; but their hope does not really arise from an enlarged view of his mercy, so much as from contracted views of their own sinfulness.

But, in conversion, these "high imaginations are cast down." The soul, enlightened to behold its own deformity, dares no longer rest on such a sandy foundation.

Others may go presumptuously into God's presence, "thanking him that they are not as other men;" but the true convert "stands afar off," and, with a sincere sense of his own unworthiness, "smites on his bosom, and cries for mercy." Instead of preferring himself before others, he now "prefers others before himself," and accounts himself "the very chief of sinners." Nor, however eminent his attainments afterwards may be, will he ever exalt himself. Paul indeed, when compelled to assert the dignity of his apostolic office, declared that he was "not a whit behind the very chief apostles, "but, to show how far such declarations were from being either agreeable to himself, or voluntary—he repeatedly called himself "a fool in boasting," and said, that, after all, "he was *nothing*."

Thus any other Christian may be necessitated on some occasion to vindicate his own character; but, so far from priding himself in it, he will loath himself in dust and ashes, crying with the convicted leper, "Impure, impure!" The habitual frame of his mind will be like that of Job, "Behold, I am vile!"

Further, the mouth of every true convert will be shut with respect to the raising of objections against the Gospel. *The doctrine of the cross is foolishness in the eyes of the natural man*. To renounce all dependence on our works, and rely wholly on the merits of another, is deemed absurd. The way of salvation by faith alone is thought to militate against the interests of morality, and to open a door to all manner of licentiousness.

On the other hand, the precepts of the gospel appear too strict; and the holiness and self-denial required by it are judged impractical, and subversive both of the comforts and duties of social life. But real conversion silences these objections. When the Gospel is "seen and considered" in its true light, Christ is no longer made "a butt of contradiction, [Luke 2:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.34)." The glory of God as shining in his face is both seen and admired, and *the union of the divine perfections as exhibited in the mystery of redemption is deemed the very masterpiece of divine wisdom*. The believer finds no disposition to open his mouth against these things, but rather to open it in devoutest praises and thanksgivings for them.

As for the way of salvation by faith alone—how suitable, how delightful does it appear! He is convinced that, if salvation were less free or less complete than the Gospel represents it, he must forever perish. He sees that it is exactly such a salvation as was most fit for God to give, and for man to receive; for that, if it were not altogether of grace, man would have whereof to boast before God; and that, *if one sinless work were required of him, he must forever sit down in utter despair*.

Nor does he now think the precepts of the Gospel too strict; there is not so much as one of them that he would dispense with; not one which he would have relaxed. He would account it an evil, rather than a benefit, to be released from his obligation to obey them. He never now complains, "How strict are the commandments!" But rather, "How vile am I, that I cannot yield to them a more cordial and unreserved obedience!" And so far is he from condemning those who are most holy and heavenly in their deportment, he wishes that he were like them; and strives to follow them as they follow Christ.

Such are the fruits that are found on all true converts without exception; even "Kings shut their mouths." They indeed, from their high station, are less under the control of human laws, and are ready on that account to suppose themselves less amenable also to the laws of God; but, when the Gospel comes with power to their souls, they no longer ask, "Who is Lord over us?" but prostrate themselves before the Savior with unreserved submission both to his *providence*and *grace*.

***~~Let us learn then from hence,~~***

***~~1. The evil and danger of prejudice.~~***

It is difficult to conceive what destruction this evil principle brings upon the world. Thousands of people in every place take exceptions against Christ and his Gospel without ever examining for themselves; they even shut their ears against everything which may be said in vindication of the truth; and thus harden themselves in their iniquities, until they perish without a remedy. Whence is it that so many have their mouths opened against the followers of Christ, stigmatizing every godly person as a wild enthusiast or deceiver? Have they searched into, and acquainted themselves with the real effects of the Gospel? Have they been careful to distinguish between the tendency of the Gospel itself, and the faults of those who embrace it? No! they have never considered, never seen, perhaps scarcely ever so much as heard, the Gospel; they have listened to some vague reports; they have gladly entertained every story which could in any way confirm their aversion to the truth; and then they think they cannot exclaim too bitterly against it.

But let us guard against indulging such an unreasonable disposition.

Let us hear and examine candidly for.

Let us consider whether the Gospel be not suited to our own particular case.

Let us beg of God to open our eyes, and to "give us a right judgment in all things."

If we use not these means of conversion, we shall be utterly inexcusable before God; but if we use them in dependence upon God, we shall surely be brought at last to the knowledge of the truth, and to the enjoyment of those blessings which that truth is sent to convey.

Let us further learn from this subject,

***~~2. The excellency of the Gospel.~~***

If we compare the effects of the Gospel with those wrought by *philosophy*, we shall see that the latter never was able to produce any general reformation, while the former, in the space of a few years, triumphed over all the lusts and prejudices of mankind. And, at this hour, the Gospel has the same power, wherever it is faithfully preached, and cordially received.

There is no lust, however inveterate, which the Gospel cannot subdue.

There is no enmity, however deeply-rooted, which the Gospel cannot slay.

There is no pride, however stubborn, which the Gospel cannot humble.

The more it is examined, the more the Gospel prevails; it needs only to be "seen and considered;" and the Gospel will soon remove every objection, and commend itself with irresistible evidence to the soul.

Let us then consider, and reflect upon this glorious subject.

Let us meditate on it, until our hearts are inflamed with love towards our adorable Redeemer.

Let our mouths be never opened more, but in thanksgivings to God and to the Lamb!

***~~#966~~***

***~~MEN'S NEGLECT OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.1)~~***

"Who has believed our report?  
 And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!"

*Wherever we turn our eyes, we find much occasion for sorrow and lamentation. The miseries which sin has brought into the world, and which are daily multiplied by the follies and wickedness of man, have rendered our world to be a valley of tears*, not only to those who most feel their weight, but to those, who, exempt from their pressure, are yet disposed to sympathize with their afflicted brethren.

But there is one subject in particular, that affords matter for the deepest regret to every benevolent mind; it is, *the unconcern which men in general manifest for their eternal interests*. This caused "rivers of tears to flow down the eyes" of David, and "great horror to take hold upon him." It was on account of this, that Jesus, unmindful of the acclamations of surrounding multitudes, stopped to weep over the murderous Jerusalem. The Prophet Isaiah, labored much to counteract this awful infatuation; but, except to a very few, who "were as signs and wonders" in the land, his efforts were unavailing; and he was constrained to take up this lamentation over them, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

For the fuller understanding of these words we shall inquire:

What is the report here referred to?

What reception it meets with in the world?

***~~I. What is the report here referred to?~~***

When our Lord expounded the Scriptures to the two disciples in their way to Emmaus, he showed them, that, according to the prophecies, "Christ ought to have suffered, and by sufferings to enter into his glory, [Luke 24:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.26-27). Indeed, that was the general testimony of all the prophets, [1 Peter 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.11); and more especially is it opened to us in the chapter now under our consideration.

*A more wonderful report never reached the ears of man!* God was manifest in the flesh. The Son of God, "Jehovah's Fellow, [Zechariah 12:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.7)," not only assumed our nature, but in our nature, he died, and "he became obedient unto death, even the accursed death of the cross." To this he submitted for our sake, and in our stead; to expiate our guilt, and, by the sacrifice of himself, to reconcile us unto God. Well might the Apostle say, "Great is the mystery of godliness;" for indeed it almost exceeds the bounds of credibility.

But, as strange as this report may seem, there never was any other so well authenticated, or established by such a variety of evidence. A series of *prophecies*respecting it, respecting not only the general outlines, but even the minutest, and most contingent circumstances of it, has been given to the Church during the space of four thousand years. Every one of these has been fulfilled; and that too by the very people who labored to the utmost to destroy the credit of the report itself. The typical representations of it also were so numerous that no human foresight could have contrived them, nor could any human power have caused a combination of such various, and, to all appearance, contradictory circumstances in one event. Without noticing therefore the miracles wrought in confirmation of it, we may well affirm that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

With respect to its importance, never was there any other report so universally interesting as this; for it is not confined to a single state or kingdom, but to all the kingdoms of the earth, and to every individual from Adam to the last of his posterity. Nor does anything less than their eternal salvation depend upon it; they, who welcome it, will find acceptance with God; and they, who reject it, will be "punished with everlasting destruction from his presence! [2 Thessalonians 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.8)." It is, in short, that Gospel, which "he who believes shall be saved; and he who believes not shall be damned! [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16)."

And what tidings were ever so replete with joy? The most signal deliverances, the most complete victories, the most glorious acquisitions, enhanced by everything that can be supposed to exhilarate the mind—are no more, in comparison with this, than a twinkling star compared to the meridian sun. Even the angelic hosts, when they came to announce the wonderful event, proclaimed it as "glad tidings of great joy to all people." None ever believed this good news, but he was instantly liberated from all his fears and sorrows, and filled with "joy unspeakable and full of glory [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)."

Such then is the report referred to in the text:

A report so marvelous, that it fills Heaven and earth with wonder!

A report so true, that we may as well doubt our own existence as entertain a doubt respecting it!

A report so interesting, that all the concerns of time and sense are, in comparison with it, but as the dust on the balance!

A report so joyous, that it is a certain and inexhaustible source of happiness to all who receive it!

But that there are few who truly believe it, will appear while we show,

***~~II. What reception the Gospel meets with in the world?~~***

If the estimate which men form of themselves were true, we would rather have to ask, "Who has *not*believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord *not*been revealed?" For all imagine themselves to be believers; and, because they have been baptized as infants into the name of Christ, they conceive themselves to be possessed of real faith. But I must say with the Apostle, "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves! [2 Corinthians 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 13.5)."

To ascertain the point, I beg you to ask yourselves two questions, namely:

How you *obtained*your faith?

How your faith *operates*?

*Do not suppose that genuine faith in Christ is a bare assent to truths which you have been taught by your parents*, or that it is that kind of conviction which is founded upon a consideration of evidence, such as you would feel respecting any common report which was substantiated to your satisfaction. True "faith is the gift of God!" [Ephesians 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.8). Nothing but the almighty power of God can form genuine faith in the soul. If ever you have "believed, it must have been through the operation of divine grace!" [Acts 18:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 18.27)

Wherever there is genuine faith, it will:  
"work by love," [Galatians 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.6)  
"overcome the world," [1 John 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.4)  
and "purify the heart," [Acts 15:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 15.9)

See then, whether your faith produces these effects! For, if it does not, it is but "a dead faith" and "the faith of devils!" [James 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.19)

If you examine yourselves in this way, you will find that there is still the same occasion as ever for the complaint in my text. The prophet Isaiah adopted it in reference to those to whom he ministered. Our blessed Lord, notwithstanding that he wrought so many miracles, was constrained to witness the same obstinate unbelief among his hearers! [John 12:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.37-38). And even the Apostle Paul, who was God's instrument to plant so many churches—yet saw reason to declare that these words were still verified in his day, [Romans 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.16).

And what must I say, my brethren? You can bear me witness that, from the first moment that I began to minister among you, this report has been faithfully delivered to you; but "Who has believed our report?" In how few among you does it produce its proper effect, so as to demonstrate that God's arm has indeed been revealed to you! Nay, I will even appeal to you, whether at this moment a true believer, who shows forth his faith by his works, and lives altogether by faith in the Son of God, as having loved him, and given himself for him, be not at this very hour, just as in the prophet's day, "a sign and a wonder! [Isaiah 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.18)." Yes, such characters are still as "men wondered at, [Zechariah 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.8);" nor is it so in this place only, but in every place where the truth is preached with fidelity and power. And this is a proof, that the report in my text is but little credited even in this so-called Christian land.

***~~Now then let me address myself:~~***

***~~1. To those who think they believe.~~***

Justly does the Apostle say, "All men have not faith, [2 Thessalonians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.2)." And this he speaks, not of professed heathen, but of those who were joined to the Church of Christ. So, brethren, I must say to you, "All are not Israel who are of Israel, [Romans 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.6)." I entreat you not to take for granted that you are right; but bring your faith to the test. Inquire carefully into its origin and operation; for, if your faith is not "the faith of God's elect," it will only deceive you to your eternal ruin. You all know how the Jews deceived themselves, by indulging a vain confidence, that because they were the natural descendants of Abraham, they were in a state of acceptance with God. Be assured, that the same fatal error obtains to a vast extent among us. If called to give a reason of the hope that is in you, how many are there who could only refer us to their birth of Christian parents, and their infant baptism! But that is no other reason than what a Mohammedan or a Hindu might give for his hopes, and his professions.

If you would not perish with the unbelieving world, I charge you before God, to dismiss from your minds all such delusive expectations, and to seek from God that true faith which alone can save and sanctify the soul.

***~~2. To those who really possess genuine faith in Christ.~~***

Such, I doubt not, are to be found among you. Yes, some of you, I trust, can call God to witness, that you have again and again "fled to Christ for refuge as to the hope set before you," and that you "count all things to be rubbish for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord."

If you possess genuine faith:

Then God has conferred upon you the greatest gift that you can possess in this world. Crowns and kingdoms, in comparison with it, are no more than the dust upon the balance!

Then you have obtained the forgiveness of all your sins!

Then you have also within your own bosom a sanctifying principle, which shall progressively transform you into the very image of your God!

Then for you is reserved "an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that never fades away!"

What then will you render to the Lord for these great benefits? This do: Consecrate yourselves to God so wholly and entirely, that when the question is asked, "Who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" all who witness your life and conduct may point to you, and say, "That man carries his own evidence along with him; however I may doubt of others, I can entertain no doubt respecting him.' This, my dear brethren, is what God expects from you. He expects that you should "shine forth as lights in the world, and so hold forth the Word of life, as to prove to all, that we have not labored in vain, or run in vain! [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)."

***~~#967~~***

***~~THE CHARACTER AND TREATMENT OF THE MESSIAH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.2-3)~~***

"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men—a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not!"

We find in almost every branch of science, that *truth can be discovered only by deep and serious investigation*. If we rest in superficial inquiries, we shall be led into numberless and fatal mistakes.

In what relates to religion more especially, an impartial examination is necessary, because *the doctrines of Scripture are confessedly repugnant both to the prejudices and passions of mankind*. Yet, as strange as it may appear, there is no other science, wherein men form their opinions on such slender information, as in that. *The generality of people adopt the notions that are current in their day, without ever considering whether they are right or wrong; the natural consequence of which is, that, in many instances, they embrace error in preference to truth*.

This was too much the habit of the Jews in reference to their Messiah. Our Lord had cautioned them not to judge according to appearance, but to judge righteous judgment; nevertheless they paid more attention to received human opinions, than to the oracles of God. Had they searched the Scriptures, they might have found that their expected Messiah was to suffer as well as to triumph; but they, thinking only of a temporal deliverer, despised the lowly condition of Jesus, and made his humiliation a ground of rejecting him. That such would be their conduct, the prophet had foretold in the words before us; wherein he assigns the lowly estate of Jesus as the very ground, on which the united testimony of Prophets and Apostles should be discredited.

In the words themselves he sets forth:

First, Some marks and characters of the Messiah.

Secondly, The treatment which the Messiah would meet with in the world.

***~~I. Some marks and characters of the Messiah.~~***

The marks and characters given of the Messiah were not only exceeding *various*, but apparently *inconsistent*with each other; and they were multiplied in the prophetic writings, in order that, when the Messiah should appear, there should be no room to question his divine mission; since *the marks themselves could not have been combined by chance, nor would have been invented by anyone who had desired to impose upon the world*.

Confining ourselves to those specified in the text, we observe:

***~~1. That the Messiah was to be obscure in his origin.~~***

This is intimated under the figure of "a root out of a dry ground." The house of David had once flourished as the cedars of Lebanon; (he himself having been one of the most powerful monarchs upon earth) but now his family was reduced; insomuch that it was like "a root" or mere stump of a tree.

Its situation too, like a "root in a dry ground," was such, as not to afford any prospect that it should ever revive again. Our Lord, like a weak and tender sucker, sprang from this root, and was, to all outward appearance, unworthy of notice. Notwithstanding the prodigies that attended his birth, and the regard paid to them for a little while, "he grew up before him," that is, before the Jewish people, in obscurity, working at the trade of his reputed father as a carpenter. This circumstance proved to be an offence, and a stumbling-block to the carnal Jews; when they heard his discourses, and saw the wonders that he wrought, they said, "Whence has this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given to him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter? And they were offended at him."

But, *if they had duly considered their own prophecies, they would have seen that his parentage and education were precisely such as had been foretold, and consequently were arguments in favor of his high pretensions.*

**2. Another mark exhibited in the text is, that he was to be lowly in his appearance.**

The Jews expected a Messiah who should come with pomp, and whose magnificence should equal, if not surpass, that of any potentate on earth; and if Jesus had appeared in this manner, he would soon have been caressed and followed by the whole nation!

But he neither possessed himself, nor promised to his followers, any of those things which are so captivating to a carnal heart. Instead of abounding in wealth, and having the great and nobles of the earth as his attendants, he was followed only by a few poor fishermen, and sometimes wanted the common necessities of life, and even a place where to lay his head.

Instead of desiring honor, he declined it, and withdrew himself, when they would have invested him with royal authority. *Nor did he give his disciples reason to expect anything in this world but reproaches, persecutions, imprisonments, and death.*Thus was he destitute of all external recommendations, "there was no form nor loveliness in him, nor any beauty for which he was to be desired."

Now the Jews did not know how to reconcile his claims to Messiahship with his lowly condition; they could not divest themselves of their prejudices. They expected a *temporal*Messiah, and consequently concluded, that the baseness of his appearance was a very sufficient reason for considering him as an impostor. They therefore contributed to make him still more contemptible in the eyes of men, and thus, by reducing him to the lowest state of infamy, unwittingly fulfilled the counsels of God concerning him.

***~~3. A third mark and character of the Messiah was that he would be afflicted in his person.~~***

He was to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." To none were these words ever so applicable as to Jesus Christ. His whole life was a continued scene of labors, trials, temptations, and sorrows. We read only *once*in the whole Scriptures, that he rejoiced in spirit; but *frequently*that he sighed, and groaned, and wept. The four last years of his life were almost wholly spent in sorrow. Not to mention his bodily labors and fatigues, or his watchings and fastings (though inasmuch as they exceeded all that ever were voluntarily endured by man, they might well be taken into the account) his other trials were greater than we can conceive.

"The contradiction of sinners against himself" must have been inexpressibly painful to his benevolent mind. He had come down from Heaven to give his own life as a ransom for them; and was continually endeavoring to lead them to the knowledge of himself, that they might obtain salvation through him. He was working a series of the most stupendous miracles in confirmation of his Word. He was laboring day and night for their sakes, making it his very food and drink to accomplish the grand ends and purposes of his mission. Yet, how were his labors requited? They caviled at his Words, ascribed his miracles to Satanic influence, and rejected the counsel of God against themselves. How grievous must this have been to him, whose whole soul was bent on their salvation! This caused him frequently to groan in spirit, and even to weep in the midst of his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

But there were yet other sources of grief, more afflictive, if possible, than this.

Whence arose his agony in the garden, when his body was bathed in bloody sweat?

Whence arose those "strong cryings and tears," with which he supplicated the removal of the bitter cup?

Whence arose the heart-rending cry, which he uttered on the cross under the hidings of his Father's face?

Surely the vials of his Father's wrath were poured out upon him; the debt which *we*had incurred, was exacted of *him*as our surety. The penalty due to *our*sin was inflicted on *his*righteous soul, "the arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in him, and made his heart within him like melting wax."

There was yet another thing which must of necessity greatly aggravate his sorrows; namely, his perfect foresight of all that should come upon him. In mercy to us, futurity is hidden from our eyes; so that, however great our calamities may be, we are comforted with a hope that our state will soon be ameliorated. *Jesus, on the contrary, saw the crisis gradually approaching, and knew the full extent of those miseries which he was about to endure. What but the most unbounded love could carry him forward under such a load as this?*

To the eye of sense indeed, this unparalleled "acquaintance with grief" would appear strange and unaccountable; but to the view of faith, it marked him as the chosen of God, the Redeemer of the world.

This subject will be yet more fully illustrated by considering,

***~~II. The treatment which the Messiah would meet with in the world.~~***

*One would scarcely suppose it possible that such a person as our Lord should sojourn upon earth, and not be universally respected*.

His exemplary piety,  
his diffusive benevolence,  
his instructive discourses,  
and his blameless conduct  
—one would think, must conciliate the esteem of all; and that gratitude at least must bind to him many thousands, whose maladies he had healed, or whose friends he had relieved.

But, to the shame of human nature be it spoken, all whom he had benefitted, seemed to have forgotten their obligations, and to vie with each other in rendering evil for good. So far from honoring him, they despised and rejected him, and even "hidden their faces from him," as not deigning to acknowledge him. There was no name so opprobrious, but they thought him deserving of it; they called him a *glutton*and a *drunkard*, a *deceiver*and *demoniac*.

Before the high-priest, they accused him of *blasphemy*; and before the Roman governor, they charged him with *treason*; so that they might secure his condemnation, and have licence to treat him as an enemy both of God and man.

The indignities given to him in the last hours of his life were altogether unparalleled; it was indeed the hour of Satan's reign, and all the powers of darkness seemed to be let loose upon him. It appeared as if nothing could satiate their malice; not content to wait the outcome of a legal process:  
they loaded him with all manner of insults and reproaches;  
they dragged him from one tribunal to another;  
they ploughed up his back with scourges, and compelled his judge to pass sentence upon him contrary to the convictions of his own conscience;  
they forced him, faint and emaciated as he was, to bear his cross, until he even sunk under the weight!

And, to complete the whole, they crucified him between two thieves; and continued their impious derision until the very instant of his death!

Nay, they were not even then satisfied; even after he was dead, they could not refrain from showing their hatred of him. One of the soldiers, expressing surely the feelings of others as well as his own, officiously thrust his spear into Jesus' side; and all the chief priests and Pharisees made application to Pilate, that he would set a guard to watch that deceiver, as they called him, lest his disciples should come by night and steal him away, and report that he had risen from the dead.

Thus did the whole nation "despise and reject him." Every other part of the creation gave testimony to him:  
the *wild beasts*in the wilderness stood in awe of him;  
the *fish*of the sea confessed his power;  
the *winds*and the *waves*obeyed his voice;  
the *holy angels*ministered unto him;  
the very *devils*acknowledged his divine mission!

But men, the men too of his own nation, the very men whom he came to redeem, rejected him, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Happy would it have been if their contempt of Christ had terminated here; but, alas! it continued unextinguished and unabated, even after he had proved his divine mission by his resurrection from the dead, and had sent down the Holy Spirit to attest his Word!

They could indeed no longer vent their spleen against his person, because he was far above out of their reach; but:  
they beat his messengers,  
they reviled his doctrines,  
they opposed his gospel to the uttermost!

No means were left untried; they used every species of persecution, that they might deter men from embracing his religion; they excommunicated, imprisoned, and murdered his followers! And, though God was pleased to convert a remnant of them, the bulk of the nation contradicted and blasphemed the gospel, until they had filled up the measure of their iniquities!

But must we confine this accusation to the people of that age and nation? Alas! where is the nation that has not poured contempt on Christ? The Apostles and other disciples of our Lord went to every quarter of the known world, and preached Jesus as the Savior of men; but in every place did the glad tidings meet with the same reception. Even where the Word was most successful, the great majority rejected it with disdain!

And how has it been received among us? Blessed be God! we are not left wholly without witness; but the generality despise and reject Christ, as much as ever the Jews did in the days of his flesh. He is not indeed exposed to their outrage; they cannot scourge and buffet him as once they did; but there are many other ways wherein they no less virulently express their contempt of him. With what pertinacity do many controvert:  
the divinity of his person,  
the reality of his atonement,  
and the efficacy of his grace!

And what is this but to deny the Lord that bought them? Again, what is more common than for people to rely upon their own repentance and reformation for acceptance with God, instead of trusting simply in his blood and righteousness? And what is this, but to rob him of his glory, and exclude him from the office of Mediator which he came to execute? Can anything be more contemptuous than this?

Again, he has given us commandments, in obeying which we are to testify our regard to him, and to honor him in the world.

But who yields to his authority?

Who brings his thoughts and actions into captivity to his will?

Is not the language of the generality at least, "We will not have this man to reign over us!"

To what purpose is it to say, *Lord, Lord!—*if we do not obey the things which he commands? It is only to act over again the part of those who bowed the knee to him, und yet smote him in the face.

Indeed, all despise him, who do not value him as they ought. If we viewed him in his real character, we would see a beauty in him for which he is to be desired; we would "behold his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father;" he would appear to us "fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" and the language of our hearts would be, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides you!"

But how few are there who thus "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!" Yet those who do not thus regard him, have no just sense of his worth and excellence, and therefore in reality under-value and despise him.

***~~We cannot better IMPROVE this subject than by observing:~~***

***~~1. What enmity there is in the heart of man against God!~~***

The Apostle of the Gentiles has told us that "the carnal and unrenewed mind is enmity against God." This indeed is a hard saying; but we have abundant proof of the truth of it in the subject we have been considering. We have evidence enough of it in the general forgetfulness of God, and the opposition to his will which prevails in the world.

But, in the instance before us, an experiment has been made; an experiment which removes all doubt, and proves indisputably, *how men would treat God, if they had him in their power*. God has, for the accomplishment of his own gracious purposes, condescended to clothe himself in human flesh, and to sojourn among men. He assumed nothing of the pomp and splendor of this world, that the attachment or aversion of men might the more evidently appear to arise from their discovery of his true character. He did not dazzle their eyes by a full display of his Deity, but allowed the rays of it occasionally to appear, as their organs of vision were able to bear it. He admitted them so close to him, that they might easily contemplate his proper character, and form a rational judgment of his excellencies and perfections. By this he gave them an opportunity of testifying what were the dispositions of their minds towards him.

And what was the result of the experiment? Did they *love*him, *admire*him, and *adore*him as God? Behold, they could "see no form nor loveliness in him." On the contrary, they hated him, despised him, and crucified him as a criminal. Nor was this owing to the violence of a few; the whole nation rose up against him, and put him to death!

Now this shows us in the clearest light, what human nature is, and what enmity there is in the heart of man against God! And O! what a humiliating thought it is, that we should be even capable of such atrocious wickedness! If anyone objects that this was *done by the Jews*; and that, if God were to come down among *us*, he would meet with a more suitable reception; we reply, That in whatever place he would appear, he would assuredly be treated in the same way; for indeed he does come; he comes to us in the preaching of his Gospel; he is truly, though not visibly, among us; for he has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" yet, so far from admiring his beauty, and adoring his goodness, we scarcely bestow a thought upon him! Yes, instead of seeking our happiness in him, and devoting ourselves wholly to his service—there is no *possession*so contemptible, but we prefer it before him, nor any *lust*so base, but we choose the indulgence of it rather than his favor!

*Let this melancholy truth sink down into our hearts, and cause us to loath ourselves in dust and ashes.*Nor let us ever rest, until our enmity is slain, and our aversion to him is turned into reverence and love.

In contrast with this, let us next observe.

***~~2. What love there is in the heart of God towards sinful and rebellious man!~~***

Had God foreseen that his creatures would have instantly and universally adored him, we must have forever marveled at the love that induced him to become incarnate. But how transcendent does that love appear, when we consider that he foresaw the wicked treatment he should meet with, and that, as he died for his very murderers, so he now invites to mercy the most contemptuous of his enemies! Let Heaven and earth stand amazed! Let all flesh give thanks unto his holy name forever and ever!

***~~#968~~***

***~~THE TRUE CAUSE OF OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.4-5)~~***

NIV. "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

*Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining the precise import of some passages of Scripture, the fundamental doctrines of our religion are all so plainly revealed, that he who runs may read them.*Yet *there is not any truth indeed, however strongly and clearly declared in Scripture, which has not been opposed by those who exalt their own reason above the Word of God*.

But to the humble mind that is willing to receive instruction, and that looks to God for the teaching of his Spirit, the general doctrines of Christianity, and that of the atonement in particular, are as clear as the sun at noon-day.

The wisdom of some has been so perverted, that they could not see any reference to Christ in this whole chapter. But no person that is not either blinded by prejudice, or intoxicated with the pride of human learning, can fail of applying the words of our text to him, "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." The prophet spoke not as a matter of doubtful disputation, when he declared the cause of the Messiah's sufferings; but with the fullest confidence asserted, that "Surely he has borne our griefs," yes, "he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In his words we may observe:

***~~I. The supposed cause of our Lord's sufferings.~~***

***~~It was a commonly received opinion that heavy afflictions were indications of God's displeasure on account of some enormous sin.~~***

This idea prevailed much among the Jews; their history abounded with instances of God's immediate interposition to punish sin; from whence they inferred, that every signal judgment proceeded from the same cause. It would seem that they had adopted this uncharitable mode of judging respecting those on whom the tower in Siloam fell, or whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, as though they were sinners above all others of their own nation, [Luke 13:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.2); [Luke 13:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.4).

On one occasion they openly avowed this principle, ascribing the blindness of a man who had been born blind, either to some peculiar wickedness in his parents, or to some heinous crimes, which he himself had committed in a former state of existence, [John 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.2).

Indeed this sentiment was the foundation of all the dispute between *Job*and his friends; they argued on the presumption that no godly man was ever left to endure very grievous trials; but that the wrath of God against hypocritical or audacious sinners would be visibly displayed in this world, [Job 4:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 4.7-9).

This idea also prevailed among the heathen world: "When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, *Justice*has not allowed him to live!" [Acts 28:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.4)."

Now this construction was put upon the sufferings of our Lord. The people saw Jesus dying under a more accumulated weight of misery than ever had been endured by man. No one since the foundation of the world had been so universally execrated, or had met with so little compassion from his fellow-creatures! They therefore concluded, that God had marked him out as an object fit to have every species and degree of cruelty exercised towards him, "they esteemed him stricken—smitten by God himself!" What a shocking indignity was this! That they should not merely regard him as a sinner, but as *the most atrocious sinner in the universe, who deserved to have a murderer preferred before him!*

***~~But this was both foretold by the prophets, and fully obviated by the occurrences of his life.~~***

In two different Psalms, confessedly relating to Christ, it was foretold that his enemies would conspire against him, and vindicate their conduct towards him from this consideration, that God himself had pointed him out by his judgments as deserving everything that could be inflicted on him, "All who hate me whisper together against me, against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaves fast unto him; and now that he lies, let him rise up no more, [Psalm 41:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 41.7-8)." And again, "My enemies speak against me, and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken him; persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver, [Psalm 71:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 71.10-11)."

This vile imputation on his character therefore becomes, in this view, a testimony on his behalf; since it was ordained that such indignities would be offered to the Messiah; and in this, as well as in a thousand other instances, the Scriptures were literally accomplished in him.

But God provided a further antidote to this impression in the occurrences of his life. Even while his enemies were conspiring to take away his life, our Lord appealed to them respecting his own innocence, "Which of you convinces me of sin? [John 8:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.46). And the very judge who pronounced the sentence of death against him, was constrained no less than three times to acknowledge publicly, that he could find no fault in him, [Luke 23:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.4); [Luke 23:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.14); [Luke 23:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 23.22).

The supposed cause of our Lord's sufferings being thus evidently founded in misapprehension and prejudice, we shall point out,

**II. The real cause of our Lord's sufferings**.

This is stated in general as originating in our wretchedness and misery.

The apostle Matthew, quoting the first words of the text, says, that they were accomplished when our Lord healed the multitudes of those who flocked around him, [Matthew 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.16), [17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matthew 8.17). And this was true, inasmuch as the maladies under which men groan, are the consequences of sin; and his removing of bodily disorders was emblematical of the spiritual diseases which he also came to heal. But the evangelist must not be understood to say, that the prophecy related to nothing more than the sympathizing with the afflicted, and the healing of their disorders. For Peter, quoting the very same passage, declares that Jesus "bore, not our sorrows merely, but our *sins*, in his own body on the tree, and healed them by his stripes! [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24)."

Hence, then, we perceive that as sin had introduced all manner of temporal, spiritual, and eternal miseries into the world—it was for the removal of them that Jesus submitted to all the sufferings which were inflicted on him.

But more particularly the prophet informs us that:

***~~1. Jesus suffered and died for the expiating of our guilt.~~***

It is certainly true, that, wherever suffering is endured by a sentient creature—there guilt must have previously been either contracted, or imputed. The brute animals would never have felt pain, if they had not been subjected to it on account of man's transgression, [Romans 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.20). Now our Lord himself "knew no sin;" and yet endured infinitely more from God, from men, and from devils, than ever had been inflicted on any human being.

But he had undertaken to redeem us from the curse of the broken law. He had engaged to pay the debt, which a whole world of sinners had contracted; and so to discharge it, that not one farthing should ever be exacted of those who should trust in him. Here then was the true cause of all his sufferings.

Is it asked, What it was that occasioned him such *diversified*and *unutterable*torments? We answer, Men and devils were the *executioners*; but our sins were the *meritorious*cause, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." There is not a sin which we have ever committed, that was not "as a sword in his bones!" And it was only by his bearing of our sins in his own body on the tree, that the *guilt*of them, and the *curse*due to them, could be taken away from us. Nothing less than this sacrifice could satisfy the demands of divine justice. As for "the blood of bulls and of goats, it was not possible that they should take away sin;" nor could we remove it by any offerings we could bring; rather, therefore, than we should perish forever, Christ laid down "his own life a ransom for us."

***~~2. Jesus suffered and died in order to effect our peace with God.~~***

God was filled with indignation against his guilty creatures; nor could he, consistently with the honor of his moral government, be reconciled to his offending people, without manifesting in some way or other, his abhorrence of their evil deeds! What then should be done? *What expedient could be found for the punishing of sin, and yet saving the sinner?*Behold, the Son of God himself offers to become our substitute! "On me be their curse, O my Father; let your sword awake against me, who am your fellow; inflict their punishment on me, and let them go free; yes, be reconciled to them for my sake."

The offer is graciously accepted; and, agreeably to the prediction before us, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" so that God is now reconciled to every believing penitent; he embraces the returning prodigal in his arms, and feasts him with the richest tokens of parental affection. To this agrees the testimony of the great Apostle in [Colossians 1:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.20-22); and it is confirmed by the happy experience of multitudes in every age.

**3. Jesus suffered and died for the renovating of our nature.**

As sin has incensed the wrath of God, so has it disordered all the faculties of man! There is not a faculty either of body or soul, which is not filled with this dire contagion, and rendered incapable of exercising its proper functions to the glory of God. But the same expedient that was devised for the expiating of our guilt, and the effecting of our peace with God—was also the most proper for the renovating of our nature. *The blood which Jesus shed upon the cross is as a balm, which heals the disorders of our souls, and restores to man the free and legitimate use of all his faculties.*This, no less than the foregoing, was a principal end of all his sufferings. Did he give his back to the smiters, so that they even "ploughed it up with scourges, and made long their furrows?" It was that "by his stripes we might be healed." He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a special people zealous of good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14). And it is worthy of observation, that Peter, quoting the text, omits all mention of other ends, and fixes upon this alone, "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed! [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24)."

***~~It would be unpardonable, if, on such a subject as this, we did not lead you to consider,~~***

***~~1. What obligations we lie under to love the Lord!~~***

If a fellow-creature should submit to excruciating torments for us—how deeply would we feel, and how gratefully would we acknowledge our obligations to him! We would wonder at such a proof of affection even from the dearest friend or relative.

What then shall we say to these tokens of love from one, to whom, in the whole course of our lives, we had shown ourselves the most determined enemies? What shall we think of the Lord Jesus, leaving the bosom of his Father on purpose to endure these things for us; to endure all that men or devils could inflict, and all that our sins had merited?

Shall we feel no grateful emotions rising in our bosom?

Shall our hearts be still frozen and obdurate?

O let us contemplate the wounds and bruises, the chastisements and stripes which he bore for us. Let us follow him through the whole scene of his sufferings, and say, with confidence and wonder, "Surely" it was all for me—to redeem me from eternal destruction, and to exalt me to eternal glory! As base as human nature is, it could not long withstand the influence of such a sight; at the view of him, whom we have pierced—our unfeeling hearts would melt, [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 12.10). Constrained to admire the unsearchable heights and depths of his love, we would burst forth into acclamations and hosannas, "To him who loved us and gave himself for us!"

***~~2. What obligations we lie under to put our trust in him!~~***

What does the self-righteous Pharisee declare, but this? "I will not trust in the Lord Jesus; he was indeed wounded for my transgressions; but I despise the way of healing by his sufferings; I can heal myself better by my own works; and I will rather wage eternal war with Heaven, than owe my peace to the chastisement of another." Can anything exceed the ingratitude which such a disposition involves in it? As for all the mockings and revilings of the Son of God, when he hung upon the cross, they were as nothing in comparison with this, because they were vented through an ignorance of his real character; whereas we acknowledge him as our Savior, and yet rob him of his glory, and make his death of none effect.

Let us then turn from such conduct with abhorrence; let us look to him, that we may be "justified by his blood," and experience the full efficacy of his atonement; so shall Jesus himself be "satisfied when he beholds this fruit of his travail!" *We shall be distinguished monuments of his love and mercy to all eternity!*

***~~#969~~***

***~~THE MEANS OF MAN'S RESTORATION TO GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.6)~~***

"All we like sheep have gone astray;  
 we have turned every one to his own way;  
 and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

*The lost state of man by nature, and his recovery through the sin-atoning death of Christ, are the two principal doctrines of the Christian religion.* If we would ascertain the comparative importance of all other doctrines, we must judge of them by the relation which they bear to these; and consider those doctrines as most important, which serve most to illustrate and confirm these fundamental points. Moreover, these two doctrines should always be considered in their relation to each other; for it is by the atonement, that we see the depth of our depravity, and it is by our depravity, that we see the necessity and excellency of the atonement. By considering them separately, we are in danger of falling into despondency or presumption; but, by uniting our views of them, our sorrows are moderated with hope, and our confidence is tempered with humility. When God tells us, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself;" he immediately adds, "but in me is your help!" Thus also the prophet, in the words before us, first sets forth our apostasy from God, and then declares the means provided for our restoration to him. These two points we propose for our present consideration:

**I. Our apostasy from God.**

The comparison which the prophet institutes between us and sheep straying from their fold, forms a humiliating, but just, picture of our fallen state. Sheep are prone to stray, if not watched and restrained by the shepherd; and, when separated from the flock, they proceed farther and farther, without ever tracing back their steps to the fold.

In the same way, the whole race of mankind may be considered as a flock, whose duty and happiness it is to live under the care of the good Shepherd. They should:  
hear his voice,  
and follow his steps,  
and feed in his pastures,  
and trust in him for protection.

But the whole flock is scattered over the face of the earth; all have departed from the fold of God, and are wandering from him, none considering:  
Where have I come from? or,  
Where am I going? or,  
How shall I find my way to God again?

They do not consider the dangers to which they are every moment exposed, nor of the infinitely greater happiness they might enjoy, if they would obey the Shepherd's voice.

What the prophet has thus illustrated by a comparison, he afterwards, as is usual in all the prophetic writings, declares in plain and express terms.

***~~All mankind have turned aside from God and his ways, into paths of their own choosing.~~***

One has chosen the way of the sensualist. To follow the bent of his own carnal inclinations, to walk at liberty in the pursuit of pleasure, to join in convivial company, to be a spectator of every vain amusement, to gratify his passions with every sensual enjoyment—this is the happiness which he desires, nor does he desire any other Heaven than this. Could he but ensure a continuance of these delights, with health and vigor to enjoy them—he would attain the very summit of his ambition!

Another prefers the way of the ambitious man. He has not any great taste for what are called the pleasures of life; he desires rather the more retired comforts of a family; to provide for whom employs all his solicitude. In prosecution of his plans for their support, he engages with assiduity in his daily work, "he rises up early, and late takes rest, and eats the bread of worry;" and looks for all his recompense in beholding the increase of his fortune, and the advancement of his dependents. Everything is made subservient to the promotion of his temporal interests; nor has he a wish or thought beyond them.

Another, scorning perhaps the sordid vices of the sensualist, and the ambitious man—by means of easy circumstances, above the cares of the worldling, or desirous perhaps to compensate for the irregularities of his former life—chooses the less beaten track of religious formality. He wishes to be regarded as a person of correct manners, and of virtuous conduct. To set an example to those around him, and to be proposed as a pattern to the rising generation, is a far higher gratification to him, than to riot in dissipation, or to amass riches. With these views he is attentive to all the external duties of religion; his prayers, such as they are, are regularly performed in the Church, the family, and the closet. A portion of the Scriptures is read at stated seasons; his servants are instructed; his children are catechized; and his hand is stretched out to relieve the poor and needy. *In short, nothing is omitted that may elevate him in the eyes of others, and serve as a foundation for self-delight*. This he supposes to be God's way, when, in fact, it is, as much as either the worldling's or the ambitious man, a way of his own; for, in all this, there is:  
nothing of brokenness of heart and contrition,  
nothing of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,  
nothing of devotedness to the glory of God.

And, in proof that this is their own way, and not God's, it may be observed, that they will proceed no farther than will consist with their own self-delight, and reputation in the world; whereas, if they really intended to do God's will, they would do it in everything, without any regard to consequences, or any secret reserves.

We do not mean to say that there is no difference with respect to these ways; for certainly a state of religious formality is incomparably better than either worldliness or profaneness; but they are all evidences of our apostasy from God; and any one of them will expose us to his just and heavy displeasure.

That such is indeed the state of man, is abundantly confirmed by other passages of holy writ. Paul proves it by a variety of citations collected together; and infers from it, that "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Peter quotes the very words of the text as applicable to every individual saint before his conversion to Christ. And we are all taught to adopt them for our own use, when we say in our Liturgy, "We have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep; we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts."

Well might we have been left to wander until we had fallen a prey to the roaring lion that seeks to devour us. But God, in compassion to our souls, has sent his only dear Son to seek us out, and to be,

***~~II. The means of our restoration to God.~~***

We are apt to imagine, that, if we have not committed any gross sin, we have no reason to fear the divine displeasure. But we should recollect that *a state of apostasy from God is the root and summit of all sin*.

The poor senseless sheep may be pitied, but cannot be blamed, for wandering from the fold, because they are unconscious of any obligation to abide under the direction of their shepherd. But our criminality in departing from God is exceedingly great. Blind as we are to spiritual truths, we yet know that there is a God, whom we ought to love and serve. We know that, to live without him in the world, or to serve him only with our lips while our hearts are far from him, is an insult to his majesty, and a violation of his commands. Yet these are the ways which we have chosen for ourselves in preference to those, which he has marked out for us in his Word.

What more do we need to incriminate us in his sight?

What more do we need to draw down his wrath and indignation upon ourselves?

The *particular acts of sin*which any commit, are only so many branches proceeding from this root, and so many ways of manifesting our aversion to him. There may indeed be degrees of guilt in respect of them; but in respect to the general habit of our minds, we are all alike:

We are willful, deliberate, and determined apostates from God.

We have cast off our allegiance to him.

We have made our own will the rule, and our own honor or interests the end, of all our actions.

We have lived to ourselves, and not unto him.

In a word, we have, so far as we could, banished God from the universe, and been a god unto ourselves. This is "the iniquity of us all."

What might have been expected, but that God should abandon such an impious race, and give them over to everlasting destruction? Yet behold, instead of leaving us to ourselves, he provided a way for our restoration to his favor. He took, not merely our particular transgressions, but the whole mass of iniquity, that had accumulated from the beginning to the end of time, and laid it on his Son.

As all the iniquities of all the children of Israel were transferred to the scape-goat under the law, that he might bear them away into a land of oblivion—so were all the sins of the whole human race transferred to Christ, that, having borne the curse due to them, he might take them all away from us forever.

*This was the plan which infinite wisdom contrived for the pardoning of sin in consistency with the divine perfections*. Had the Governor of the universe received his apostate creatures to favor without any atonement, it might have appeared a light matter to transgress against him; and he himself might have seemed indifferent about the rights of justice, and the honor of his government.

But by providing such a substitute, he at once discovered his abhorrence of iniquity, and showed himself just, while he should justify those that believe in Jesus.

Doubtless this was done with the consent and concurrence of his Son; for otherwise it had been an act of injustice to him; but it was nevertheless a fruit of the Father's love, and an expedient devised by him for the salvation of a ruined world; an expedient never sufficiently to be admired, the theme of men and angels to all eternity!

How this operates to counteract our apostasy may easily be seen. In the state of man two things were to be remedied:  
the guilt of man's departure,  
and his propensity to depart.

And the same remedy was found effectual for both.

By the sin-atoning death of Jesus in our stead, our guilt is cancelled, and justice itself is satisfied on our behalf.

Moreover the gift of the Holy Spirit is procured for us, that by his operations, our nature may be changed, and we may be brought to delight as much in the ways of God as ever we delighted in the ways of sin. It is true, the very best of men have within them still a proneness to wander; and, if left to themselves, they would yet again depart from their Good Shepherd. But this is not their wish, as once it was; nor can they for a single day be absent from him without pain and sorrow, yes, without a determination instantly to return to him, and to watch more carefully against the beginnings of declension from him.

Peter himself tells us, that, as this was the intent of our Savior's death, so it is also its uniform effect, "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" do we ask for what end he bore them? it was, "that we, being dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness!" The apostle then adds, "By whose stripes you were healed." Do we inquire, wherein this healing consists? he tells us, "For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, [1 Peter 2:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.24-25)."

In order that we may make a suitable improvement of this subject, let us,

***~~1. Adopt the confession of the prophet.~~***

How justly he represents our fallen state, is but too evident both from Scripture and experience. We do not say that all have lived in open immoralities, or that all have despised the ordinances of religion. God forbid. There surely are many, who, in their outward deportment both towards God and man, have been comparatively blameless, yes, exceeding amiable and praiseworthy. But we must recur to the former accusation, and comprehend all under the awful character of apostates from God. And is there one among us that will presume to deny the charge? Did *the prophet*include himself in the accusation, and shall *we*plead innocence? Did Paul say, respecting himself and all the other Apostles, that they all had been "once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," and shall *we*exalt ourselves above them? Let us rather beg of God to show us the depth of our depravity, and to humble us in the dust under a sense of our departure from him. And let us not rest in general confessions, saying, "All we have gone astray;" but let "every one" of us search out the particular way to which "we have turned, and go to God, saying: "Thus and thus have I done." This must of necessity precede our return to God; or rather, it is the first step of our return. But, if we are too proud to acknowledge our apostasy, if we yet remain ignorant of our guilt and danger, let us not wonder, if we are left to depart from him, until our separation becomes irreparable and eternal.

***~~2. Having adopted from our hearts the confession of the prophet, let us proceed to imitate the conduct of our God.~~***

Behold what the Father did, when no other way remained for our restoration to his favor; *he took all our iniquities, and laid them on the head of his own Son!*Thus must we also do, if we would have them removed from our own souls. We must come, not with a few of our most heinous sins, but with all, with the entire guilt of our apostasy from God. As guilty and self-ruined creatures, without help or hope in ourselves, must lay all of our sins on the head of Jesus. We must not account any so great, as to doubt whether we may transfer them to him, or any so small, as to think we can atone for them ourselves; we must carry all to him, that we may be "justified by his blood, and be saved from wrath through him."

We must resemble the penitent under the law, who, while he presented his offering that was to be sacrificed in his stead, laid his hands upon its head, and confessed over it his sins. Let us only be like-minded with God in this particular, and lay our iniquities on his dear Son, and we have nothing to fear. Our *past*transgressions shall be forgiven; and our *present*propensities shall be healed; we shall be brought home on the shoulders of our exulting Shepherd, and shall lie down beside the clear streams, until called to follow him to his pastures above, where we shall be "one fold under one Shepherd" for evermore!

***~~#970~~***

***~~CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.7)~~***

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

*The preaching of Christ crucified has in every age been the great means of converting men to God*; nor is there any passage of Scripture, which may not, by a judicious exposition of it, be improved either for leading us to Christ, or for instructing us how to honor him in the world.

But it is scarcely possible for anyone to read the chapter before us, without having his thoughts led to Christ in every part of it. It is rather like a *history*than a prophecy—since everything relating to him is so circumstantially described, and, instead of being enveloped in obscurity, is declared with the utmost plainness and perspicuity.

The portion of it selected for our present consideration was signally honored of God to the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, who, on his return from Jerusalem, was reading it in his chariot; God sent his servant Philip to unfold to him the mysteries contained in it; and Philip, having at his request seated himself in the chariot with him, "began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus! [Acts 8:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.27-28); [Acts 8:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.32); [Acts 8:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.35)." May the same divine energy accompany our ministrations, while we lead your attention to that adorable Savior, and point out to you both his *sufferings*, and his *behavior*under them!

***~~I. Let us contemplate the sufferings of Jesus.~~***

At the first view of this passage we would be led to expatiate upon the greatness of our Redeemer's sufferings; but there is a very important idea contained in it, which, though obscurely intimated in our translation, might with propriety be more strongly expressed. Instead of dwelling on the *intenseness*of his sufferings, we shall rather speak of Christ's sufferings as *vicarious*.

We, by sin, had incurred a debt, which not all the men on earth or angels in Heaven were able to discharge. In consequence of this, we must all have been consigned over to everlasting perdition—if Jesus had not engaged on our behalf to satisfy every demand of law and justice. When he saw that there was none able or willing to avert from us the miseries to which we were exposed, "his own arm brought salvation to us! [Isaiah 59:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.16)." As Paul, interposing for the restoration of Onesimus to the favor of his master whom he had robbed, said, "If he has robbed you, or owes you anything, put that on my account; I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it"—so did our Lord, as it were, address his Father on our behalf; that a full compensation being made for our iniquities, we might be restored to the divine favor.

Jesus having thus become our surety, our debt was exacted of him, and he was made answerable for it. The demands of justice could not be relaxed. However desirous the Father himself was that man should be spared, the honor of his government absolutely required that the violations of his law should be punished. On whoever guilt should be found, whether on the principal or the surety, it must be marked as an object of God's utter abhorrence.

Not even his only dear Son, if he should stand in the place of sinners, could be exempt from the penalty due to sin. Hence, when the time was come, in which Jesus was to fulfill the obligations he had contracted, he was required to pay the debt of *all for whom he had died*; and to pay it to the very utmost farthing!

It was by his sufferings and death, that he discharged this debt. Let us only call to mind the sentence originally denounced against sin, and we shall see that he endured it in all its parts.

Were our bodies and our souls doomed to inconceivable misery? He sustained, both in body and soul, all that men or devils could inflict upon him!

Was shame to be a consequence of transgression? Never was a human being loaded with such ignominy as he, "the very ungodly mocking him incessantly, and gnashing upon him with their teeth! [Psalm 35:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.15-16)."

Were we to be banished from the presence of God, and to have a sense of his wrath in our souls? Behold, Jesus was "bruised by the Father" himself! He experienced such bitter agonies of soul, that the blood issued from every pore of his body; and he who had sustained in silence all that *man*was able to inflict, cried out by reason of the darkness of his soul, and the inexpressible torment that he suffered under the hidings of his Father's face.

Were we subjected to a curse? He was, by the special providence of God, doomed to a death, which had long before been declared accursed; and was given up into the hands of the Romans, in order that he might, in the strictest sense, "be made a curse for us!"

Finally, had the decree gone forth, "The soul that sins, it shall die?" He filled up the measure of his sufferings by death, and effected our deliverance by "giving his own life as a ransom for us."

It may be said indeed, that we had deserved eternal misery; whereas that which he endured was but for a time. This is true; nevertheless there was no defect in his payment; because his temporary sufferings were equivalent to the eternal sufferings of all the human race; equivalent, as far as related to the ends for which they were inflicted, to the honor of the divine perfections, and the equity of God's moral government.

Indeed, the value of his sufferings infinitely surpassed all that ever could have been endured by man; if the whole world of sinners had been suffering for millions of ages, the demands of the law would never have been satisfied; eternity itself must have been the duration of their torments! But the dignity of Christ's nature, as God over all, stamped an infinite worth on all that he did and suffered. Hence his death was a full, perfect, and sufficient atoning sacrifice for the sins of men; in the hour of his death he "blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, nailing it to his cross." Thus was our debt wholly cancelled; and "there now remains no condemnation to those who believe in him."

Having this glorious end in view, he exhibited, throughout the whole of his sufferings, the most wonderful magnanimity.

***~~II. Let us contemplate the behavior of Jesus under his sufferings.~~***

Nothing can exceed the beauty and propriety of the *images*by which our Lord's patience is here illustrated. As a *sheep*, when the shearer is stripping it of its clothing, makes neither noise, nor resistance; and as a *lamb*sports about even while being driven to the slaughter, yes, and licks the very hand that is lifted up to slay it—so our blessed Lord endured all his sufferings *silently*, willingly, and with expressions of *love*to his very murderers!

Twice is his silence noticed in the text, because it indicated a self-government, which, under his circumstances, no created being could have exercised. The most eminent saints have opened their mouths in complaints both against God and man.

Job, that distinguished pattern of patience, even cursed the day of his birth.

Moses, the meekest of the sons of men, who had withstood numberless provocations—yet, at last, spoke so unadvisedly with his lips, that he was excluded, on account of it, from the earthly Canaan.

And even the Apostle Paul, than whom no human being ever attained a higher eminence in any grace, broke forth into "revilings against God's high-priest," who had ordered him to be smitten contrary to the law.

But "there was no deceit in the lips of Jesus;" nor did he ever once open his mouth in a sinful or unfitting manner. On one occasion indeed he expostulates with his God and Father, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" But herein he did not express the smallest degree of impatience, or of murmuring against God. As a man, he could not but feel, and as a godly man, he could not but bewail—the loss of the divine presence; and in this complaint he has shown us the intenseness of his own sufferings, and the manner in which every godly man ought to plead with God in an hour of distress and trouble.

Nor did he ever utter any vindictive threatenings against his enemies. He foretold indeed the destruction which they would bring upon themselves when they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but this he did with tears and sorrow of heart, not to intimidate them, but to express his affection for them.

His silence before the tribunal of Pilate was not a stubborn or scornful silence, but a meek and dignified resignation of himself to the will of his blood-thirsty enemies. How easily could he have retorted all their charges upon them, and put both his judge and his accusers to shame! But his time was come; and he would have all the prophecies accomplished in him. Moreover, when he was smitten unjustly before the very seat of justice, he made no other reply than this, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smite do you me?" Thus, in the midst of all the cruelties and indignities that could be offered him, he never once uttered an angry, a vindictive, or an unadvised word.

Indeed there was not only a *submission*, but a perfect *willingness*, on his part, to bear all that he was called to suffer.

When first he became our surety, and it was proposed to him to assume our nature for that purpose, he replied, "Lo, I come, I delight to do your will, O my God! Yes, your law is within my heart! [Psalm 40:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 40.6-8)."

When Peter would have dissuaded him from subjecting himself to the miseries which were coming upon him, our Lord rebuked him with a just severity, as the very first-born of Satan; since none could more effectually do the part of Satan, than he who would attempt to divert him from his purpose of suffering in the place of sinners.

"With great earnestness did he desire to eat the last Passover with his disciples," and "to be baptized with his bloody baptism;" yes, and "was greatly straitened until it would be accomplished." He might easily have escaped, when Judas with a band of soldiers came to apprehend him in the garden; but, notwithstanding "he knew all things that were coming upon him," he voluntarily went up to them, and asked them, whom they sought; and, after he had shown them by one exercise of his power that he could easily have struck them all dead upon the spot, even as Elijah had done before him, [John 18:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 18.6), he gave himself up into their hands, stipulating however for his disciples (as he had long since done in effect with his heavenly Father for us), "If you seek me, let these go their way."

At the time of his death also, to convince the people that his nature was not exhausted, he with an exceeding loud voice committed his spirit into his Father's hands, showing thereby, that no man took his life from him, but that he laid it down of himself; and the evangelist particularly marked this by saying, "He yielded up," or, as the word means, he "dismissed his spirit, [Matthew 27:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 27.50)."

*In the midst of all his sufferings, he abounded in expressions of love to his very murderers.* When he came within sight of that obstinate and wicked city, instead of feeling any resentment, he wept over it, and pathetically lamented the invincible obstinacy which would shortly involve it in utter ruin. Many, even thousands of its blood-thirsty inhabitants, were savingly interested in that intercessory prayer, which he offered on the very eve of his crucifixion; the blessed effects of which were fully manifested on the day of Pentecost.

While he yet hung on the cross, instead of accusing them to his Father, he prayed for them, and even pleaded their ignorance in extenuation of their guilt, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And after he had risen triumphant from the grave, he still manifested the same unbounded compassion, directing his disciples to make the offers of salvation first to that very people, who had treated him with such consummate cruelty! [Luke 24:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.47); and to assure them that the*blood which they had shed, was ready to cleanse them from the guilt of shedding it.*

Such was the behavior of our blessed Lord, every way suited to his august character, and calculated to promote the great ends of his mission; for while, by his sufferings, he paid the penalty that was due from us, and thus "finished transgression, and made an end of sin," he fulfilled also the obedience which the law required, and "brought in for sinners an everlasting righteousness! [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)."

***~~This subject, replete with wonder, affords us,~~***

***~~1. An occasion for thankfulness.~~***

Let us for a moment endeavor to realize our state before God. We have sinned against him; we have multiplied our transgressions; they are more in number than the stars of Heaven, or the sands upon the sea shore. We owe to God a debt of ten thousand talents; and are unable to pay the least farthing towards it. What if we exert ourselves to serve God better in the future? If we could live as angels in the future, we could make no satisfaction for our *past*transgressions; the not continuing to increase our debt would not discharge the debt already incurred. But we cannot help adding to the sinful tally every day we live. What then should we do, if we had not a surety? Where should we hide ourselves from our creditor? How should we contrive to elude his search, or to withstand his power? Alas! our case would be pitiable indeed. But adored be the name of our God, who has "laid help upon One that is mighty!" Adored be that Jesus, who undertook to pay the price of our redemption, and who says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom! [Job 33:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 33.24)."

*To view our situation aright let us consider ourselves, like Isaac, already devoted to death, and the arm of God himself uplifted to inflict the fatal stroke! When there seemed no prospect whatever of deliverance, divine mercy interposed to avert the impending ruin; and Jesus, like the ram caught in the thicket, offered himself in our stead!*[Genesis 22:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 22.13).

And shall we be insensible to all his love? Will not "the very stones cry out against us, if we should hold our peace?" O then "let them give thanks, whom the Lord has redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy!"

But this subject affords us also,

***~~2. A pattern for our imitation.~~***

The delivering of us from destruction was by no means the only end of our Savior's suffering. He further intended to "leave us an example, that we should follow his steps;" that as he, "when reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him who judges righteously; so we and all his disciples, should walk according to the same rule."

How excellent is such a disposition! How incomparably more glorious does Jesus appear, when "giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and when he hid not his face from shame and spitting," than any of the heroes of antiquity riding in their triumphal car, and dragging captive princes at their chariot wheels! If then we would be truly great, let our first victory be over our own spirit. Let us "possess our souls in patience," that, "patience having its perfect work, we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." "If our enemy hungers, let us feed him; if he thirsts, let us give him drink; that by so doing we may heap coals of fire on his head," not to consume him, but to melt him into love. Let us "not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good! [Romans 12:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.20-21)."

Difficult, no doubt, this conduct is; but can we lack an inducement to it, when we reflect how Christ has loved us, and given himself for us? Should we think it much to forgive our fellow-servant a few pence—when we have been forgiven ten thousand talents? Let us remember that all our professions of faith, if we are destitute of this love, are vain and worthless.

"If we could speak with the tongues of men and angels, or had faith to remove mountains," or zeal to endure martyrdom—yet if we lacked the ornament of a meek, patient, and forgiving spirit, we should be "only as sounding brass, or as tinkling cymbals." God has warned us, that, as the master seized his unforgiving servant, and cast him into "prison until he should pay the utmost farthing;" "so will he also do unto us, if we forgive not from our hearts every one his brother their trespasses, [Matthew 18:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.35)." Let us then set Christ before our eyes. Let us learn of him to forgive, not once, or seven times, but seventy times seven; or, to use the language of the Apostle, let us "be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us! [Ephesians 4:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.32)."

***~~#971~~***

***~~OUR LORD'S TRIAL AND EXECUTION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.8)~~***

"He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

It has been generally thought, especially among heathen writers, that if virtue could be set before the eyes of men, and exhibited by some pattern of perfect excellence, it would conciliate the esteem of all, and be held in universal admiration. But Socrates entertained a very different opinion; he thought that if any person possessed of perfect virtue were to appear in the world, his conduct would form so striking a contrast to that of all around him, that he would be hated, despised, and persecuted, and at last be put to death; because the world could not endure the implied, but keen reproofs, which such an example must continually administer. Experience proves that the opinion of this great philosopher was founded in a just estimate of human nature.

Such a light did come into the world, "it shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not;" the workers of iniquity hated the light, and endeavored to extinguish it, though their malicious attempts served but to make it burn with brighter luster. *The Lord Jesus was none other than virtue itself incarnate*; and his enemies abundantly justified the opinion of Socrates; for they combined against him, and treated him with unexampled cruelty, and slew him. The extreme injustice of their conduct towards him is strongly marked in the words before us; which, on account of their intricacy, we shall explain, and, as replete with useful instruction, we shall then improve.

***~~I. To explain the text.~~***

Commentators have differed much in their interpretation of the former clauses of the text; some referring them to the *exaltation*of Christ, and others to his *humiliation*.

According to the former, they import that God would raise him from the dead, and give him an inexpressible weight of glory, together with an innumerable seed, who would, as it were, be born to him.

But we very much prefer the interpretation that refers them to the trial and execution of our Lord; for, in this view, they form an evident connection between his behavior under the indignities offered him, verse 7, and his burial in the grave of a rich man, verse 9. Bishop Lowth translates them thus, "He was taken off by an oppressive judgment; and his manner of life who would declare?"

According to this view of the words, they particularly specify the injustice, which, under a legal form, should be exercised towards him, and the lack of that, which was, in every court of justice, the privilege of prisoners, the liberty of calling witnesses to testify on his behalf. Our Lord himself refers to that custom in his answer to the high-priest, [John 18:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 18.20-21), "I spoke openly to the world; and in secret have I said nothing; why do you ask me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said to them; behold, they know what I said."

Paul also, when before Festus and Agrippa, complained that his adversaries withheld from him the testimony, which their knowledge of him qualified them to give, "My manner of life from my youth know all the Jews, who knew me from the beginning (if they would testify) that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee, [Acts 26:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.4-5)."

A further confirmation of this sense of the words arises from the manner in which they are cited by an inspired writer. Luke, quoting the very passage before us, says, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away;" and, "who shall declare his generation, [Acts 8:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 8.33)." Now though the latter words are the same as in the text—yet the former vary considerably from it; and seem to determine this to be the true scope of the whole; namely, that the most common rights of justice should be denied to our Lord at the time of his trial.

The history of our Lord is but too just a comment on this prophecy; for surely there never was a person treated with such flagrant injustice as he. His enemies, unable to lay anything to his charge, suborned false witnesses, that they might take away his life by perjury; and when these agreed not in their testimony, they laid hold of an expression used by him some years before, and put a different construction upon it from what he ever intended, in order to found on that a ground of accusation against him. They dragged him from one tribunal to another in hopes of obtaining sentence against him; and when the governor, after repeated examinations, declared that he could find no fault in him, they would not allow him to pass such a sentence as law and equity demanded, but in a tumultuous and threatening manner, compelled him to deliver him up into their hands, and to sanction their cruelties by his official mandate.

The particular injustice which we are more immediately called to notice, was, that they never once summoned any witnesses to speak on his behalf. If they had permitted the herald, as on other occasions, to invite all who knew the prisoner to give testimony to his character, how many thousands could have disproved the accusations of his enemies, and established his reputation on the firmest basis! What multitudes could have affirmed, that instead of usurping the prerogatives of Caesar, he had miraculously withdrawn himself from the people, when they sought to invest him with royal authority; and had charged them to be as conscientious in giving to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, as unto God the things that were God's!

And while these invalidated the charges of treason and sedition, how many myriads could have borne witness to his transcendent goodness! How might they have said:  
"I was blind, and he gave me sight;  
I was deaf, and he unstopped my ears;  
I was mute, and he loosed my tongue;  
I was lame, and he invigorated my limbs;  
I was sick, and he restored me to health;  
I was possessed with devils, and he delivered me from their power;  
I was dead, and he raised me to life again!"

Possibly some might have been found, who had not lost all remembrance of his kindness, provided they had been allowed to speak on his behalf; but, as on a former occasion, the chief priests had excommunicated the blind man for arguing in his defense, [John 9:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.22); [John 9:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.34), so now did they intimidate all, insomuch that none dared to open their lips in his favor. Even his own disciple, who had promised the most faithful adherence to his cause, forsook him in this extremity, and, through fear of their threatened vengeance, denied, with oaths and curses, that he even knew the man!

Having prevailed by dint of clamor, the Jews led him forth to execution, that he might be "cut off out of the land of the living." But no Jewish punishment was sufficiently cruel to satiate their malice; they therefore, notwithstanding their rooted hatred of a foreign yoke, voluntarily acknowledged their subjection to the Romans, that they might be gratified with seeing him die by the most lingering, painful, and ignominious of all deaths—a death which none but slaves were ever allowed to endure.

Who that had seen the universal and invincible determination of the Jewish people to destroy him, must not have concluded that he was one whose unparalleled iniquities had excited their just abhorrence? Who, on being told that there was not one found upon the face of the whole earth to speak a word on his behalf, must not have been persuaded that he suffered for his own transgressions?

But though the testimony of man was not formally and audibly given at the bar of judgment, there was abundant proof that he suffered, not for his own sins, but for ours. There was a remarkable concurrence of circumstances to establish his innocence, not only in spite of their efforts to prove him guilty, but, in a great measure, arising from them. The endeavors of the chief priests to bring false witnesses, clearly showed that they had no just ground of accusation against him.

Had any person been able to impute evil to him, it is most probable that *Judas*would have done it, and would have brought it forth in vindication of his own conduct; but he, so far from justifying his own treachery, restored to the chief priests the wages of iniquity, affirming that he had betrayed innocent blood; and they, unable to contradict him, tacitly acknowledged the truth of his assertion, bidding him to look to that as his concern.

*Pilate*not only declared repeatedly that he could find no fault in him, but that neither was *Herod*able to lay anything to his charge. He even came forth before them all, and washed his hands, in token that the guilt of condemning that just person should lie on those who had demanded his execution, and not on him who had reluctantly consented to it.

The *thief*upon the cross, reproving his contemptuous companion, attested the innocence of Jesus, saying, "We indeed suffer justly; but this man has done nothing amiss." If he is thought an incompetent witness, because he spoke not from his own knowledge; we affirm that his testimony was so much the stronger, because it was founded on common report, and therefore was not the testimony of a mere individual, but of the Jews in general.

To these we may add the testimony of the *Centurion*, who had been stationed to superintend the execution.

He had seen the dying behavior of this persecuted man;  
he had seen that, immediately before his death, he had cried with a loud voice, manifesting thereby that he willingly surrendered up his soul, while his body was yet strong and vigorous;  
he had been witness to that supernatural darkness during the three last hours of our Savior's life;  
he had felt the earthquake at the moment of his departure from the body.

By these, as well as other circumstances, he was convinced of Jesus' innocence, and exclaimed in the hearing of the people, "Truly this was a just man, this was the Son of God!" Thus evident was it in the midst of all the obloquy that was cast on Jesus, that he was not stricken for any transgressions of his own.

Our iniquities were the true occasion of all the calamities that Jesus endured! How far, and to what extent, he may be said to have suffered for the transgressions of those who shall never be numbered among "God's people," is a point not easy to determine, nor at all necessary to inquire into. In some sense it is undeniable, he died for all, and was "an atoning sacrifice, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of men;" and if it is asked, who brought him from Heaven? Who betrayed, condemned and crucified him? We answer, The Jews and Romans were the instruments, but *"our transgressions" were the true and only cause, of all his sufferings*. Nor can the importance of this truth be more strongly marked than by the frequent repetition of it in this short chapter. Indeed, if this is not borne in mind, we may be affected with the recital of his history, as we would be with the history of Joseph, or any other pathetic story; but we shall be forever destitute of those benefits, which his vicarious sufferings were intended to impart.

Having explained the words before us, we shall endeavor,

***~~II. To improve the text.~~***

***~~We may well learn from them, in the first place, to guard against the effects of popular prejudice and clamor.~~***

Never was the power of prejudice so awfully manifest as on this occasion. The chief priests and rulers had only to raise an outcry against Jesus, and the unthinking populace adopted their views, and carried into effect their most inhuman purposes. It was quite sufficient to stigmatize Jesus with some opprobrious name, and all his virtues were obscured, all his benevolent actions were forgotten; and the common forms of justice were superseded for his readier condemnation.

Thus it is also at this day with respect to his Gospel. We profess indeed, as Christians, to reverence the name of Christ; but there is precisely the same hatred to his Gospel in the hearts of carnal men, as there was to his person in the hearts of those who nailed him to the cross. His followers are now, no less than in former ages, "a sect everywhere spoken against." Some name of reproach is given to them; and that is sufficient to put every one on his guard against them, and to render them objects of general scorn and contempt. Their opinions are misrepresented; opinions and practices are imputed to them without any just foundation; nor can any innocence of conduct, any excellence of character, any exertions of benevolence, secure them a candid and impartial judgment.

We easily see what ought to have been the conduct of the Jews, before they proceeded to inflict such miseries on our adorable Savior; they should have compared his character with the prophetic writings; and examined the evidences he adduced in support of his pretensions. Had they done this, they would never have "crucified the Lord of glory."

Thus should we also do with respect to his Gospel. Instead of condemning it unheard, we should give it an attentive and patient hearing. We should then bring what we hear to the touchstone of divine truth, and, by comparing it with the sacred oracles, endeavor to ascertain how far it is worthy of our belief. Such conduct would be reasonable, even if the Gospel affected our happiness only in this present life. But when we consider that our everlasting salvation also depends on our acceptance of it, surely we must be inexcusable indeed, if we will not bestow this attention on a concern of such infinite importance.

On the other hand, if, like the Bereans, we search the Scriptures daily, to see whether things be as they are represented to us, we doubt not respecting the outcome of such an inquiry; we shall soon believe the Gospel, and enjoy its richest blessings.

Let us not then allow our judgment to be warped by prejudice, or our inquiries to be stopped by popular clamor. If any people are objects of general odium on account of their religious opinions and conduct, let us not hastily conclude that they are wrong; lest perhaps we "be found fighting against God," and "reject the counsel of God against ourselves."

The opposition made to them may perhaps be rather considered as a presumption in their favor; because the true religion, and its most strenuous advocates, have in every age been maligned and opposed. The just medium is, neither to reject nor receive anything without a diligent and impartial examination; but "to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, [1 Thessalonians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.21)."

This subject may further teach us,

***~~2. To expect injuries from the hands of the ungodly world.~~***

The Scripture has plainly told us that we must suffer with Christ in order that we may reign with him. Nor did our Lord conceal this truth from his followers; on the contrary, he was peculiarly solicitous that they should bear it in mind, "Remember," says he, "the Word that I said unto you: The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you! [John 15:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.20)." It is certain, therefore, that we must be conformed to our Savior's image, and, like him, be made perfect through sufferings. If we think to resemble him in holiness, and yet to escape the cross, we shall find ourselves disappointed in the outcome. We must either violate our conscience by sinful compliances, or bear reproach on account of our singularity. We may indeed, by a long course of exemplary conduct, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, [1 Peter 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.15). But our fortitude will be tried; nor can we hope that God will make our enemies to be at peace with us, until our ways have long been pleasing in his sight, and our fidelity has been proved by many painful and victorious conflicts.

It is worthy of observation, that Peter makes this very improvement of our Lord's sufferings, "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind! [1 Peter 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.1); [1 Peter 4:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12-13)." He goes further still; and bids us "not think it strange if we should be tried with fiery trials, as though some strange thing happened unto us; but rather to rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding joy!"

Let us then take up our cross daily, and follow Christ. Let no fear of man deter us from a conscientious discharge of our duty. Let us "remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds." And if we have reason to expect, that, like him, we shall even be "cut off out of the land of the living" for our adherence to the truth—then let us cheerfully "suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together."

There is yet one more improvement which, above all, it behooves us to make of this subject. It powerfully speaks to all of us this beneficial admonition.

***~~3. Let that be a source of grief to you, which was an occasion of such misery to Christ.~~***

Can we recollect that every transgression of ours inflicted a wound on the sacred body of our Lord, yes and caused the deepest agony in his soul—and yet review our past lives with indifference? Shall not rather the experience of every day fill us with shame and contrition? And shall not sin appear so hateful in our eyes, that we shall henceforth turn away from it with indignation and abhorrence?

We are informed that *David*, when three of his worthies had cut their way through the Philistine hosts, and, at the most imminent peril of their lives, had brought him water from the well of Bethlehem, forbore to drink of it, and poured it out before the Lord with this reflection, "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? [2 Samuel 23:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.15-17)." However much he had thirsted for it, he was deterred by this consideration from even tasting it.

And shall not we, when tempted to gratify any unhallowed appetite, call to mind what it cost our Lord to redeem us from it? However strong may be our thirst for sin, shall not the remembrance of our having so often drank it with greediness, abase us in the dust? And shall we not in future put away the cup from our lips, saying, 'This is the blood, not of a mere man who jeopardized his life, but of God's only Son, who actually died for me! Was he crucified for me once, and shall I now crucify him afresh! Did he shed his precious blood for me, and shall I tread him under foot, and count his blood an unholy thing! How shall I do such wickedness, and sin thus against my God and Savior!'

This is indeed a good improvement of the subject before us; this were to answer the great end of all Christ's sufferings; since "he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a special people zealous of good works!"

This too beyond all things would evince us to be the very "people of God, for whose transgressions he was stricken." Let this effect then be visible among us. So when we ourselves shall stand at the tribunal of our Lord, our lives shall testify on our behalf; and the judge of the living and the dead shall say, "I know that you feared me, seeing that you put away from you the accursed thing which my soul hated!"

***~~#972~~***

***~~THE FATHER'S CONDUCT TOWARDS THE INNOCENT JESUS EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.9-10)~~***

KJV. "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief."

NIV. "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand!"

*The accomplishment of the prophecies is one of the strongest arguments for the truth of Christianity.* The predictions which relate to the great Founder of our religion are so numerous and so minute, that they could not possibly have been dictated by any but Him, to whom all things are naked and open, and who works all things after the counsel of his own will. The very smallest circumstances of our Lord's death, even such as were most unlikely and insignificant—were pointed out with as much accuracy as those which were most important.

What could be more unlikely, than that he should be crucified, when crucifixion was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment? Yet that was foretold by David hundreds of years before Rome was built.

What could be more unlikely than that, if he were crucified, he should not have his legs broken, when that was the customary way of hastening the end of those who were crucified, and they who were crucified with him were actually so treated? Yet it was foretold fifteen hundred years before, that "a bone of him should not be broken."

What more insignificant, than that the soldiers should cast lots for his garments? Yet that, with many other things equally minute, was circumstantially foretold.

So, in the text, his honorable interment after his disgraceful death is predicted, "his grave," as the words may be translated, "was appointed with the wicked; but with the rich was his tomb."

Now, if we consider the treatment which Jesus was to meet with, it was necessary that such events as could not be foreseen by human wisdom, or accomplished by man's device, could be foretold; because such a concurrence of circumstances, all happening exactly according to the predictions concerning him, would fully vindicate his character, and manifest that all which he suffered was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Notwithstanding he was innocent and spotless in himself—yet he was to be treated as the vilest of malefactors. Nor was he to be persecuted and put to death by men only, but to be an object also of the Divine displeasure. Therefore it was foretold by the prophet in the text, that although he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth—yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief."

From these words we shall take occasion to consider:

First, The innocence of Jesus.

Secondly, The conduct of the Father towards him.

Thirdly, The reasons of that conduct.

***~~I. Let us consider the innocence of Jesus.~~***

The declaration of our Lord's innocence is here peculiarly strong; it is not merely asserted, That he did no violence, but it is taken for granted as a thing which could not admit of one moment's doubt, "although he had done no violence." And indeed, well might it is taken for granted; for, if he were not innocent himself, he could not be an atoning sacrifice for our sins; if he had in the least deviated from the perfect law of God, he himself had needed an atonement for his own sins, as much as we for ours.

Under the ceremonial law, the lamb that was to be offered in sacrifice at the Passover was solemnly set apart four days before, in order that it might be examined; and, if it had the least spot or blemish, it was not worthy to be offered. To this Peter refers, when he calls our Lord "a Lamb without blemish, and without spot;" and it should seem that our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem just four days before the Passover, and the strict examination of him before Pilate and the chief priests, were intended to fulfill that type.

In reference to the same, John says, "He was manifested to take away our sin; and in him was no sin;" for if there had been any sin in him, he could not have removed ours.

The text sets forth his innocence in two particulars, "he did no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth." *Deceit and violence are the fruits of wisdom and power when abused*. *Alas! wisdom is but too often employed in devising mischief, as power is in executing it.*Our Lord was endued with wisdom; for "in him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And he was possessed of power; for all nature, animate and inanimate, was under his control; but he never abused either for the purposes of deceit or violence. On the contrary, he employed his wisdom in confounding his captious adversaries, and in explaining the mysteries of his kingdom to his followers; and his power he exerted in working miracles upon the bodies of men, and in effecting the conversion of their souls. Who can read any of his discourses without acknowledging, as they did of old, that "he spoke as never any man spoke!" Who that hears him commanding the impure spirits with authority, and rebuking the winds and the sea, must not immediately confess, that "no man could do these things except God were with him!"

Sometimes indeed he answered differently from what we might have expected; as when he told the young man to "enter into life by keeping the commandments;" but this he did, because he knew that *the young man's heart was proud of his great attainments, at the same time that it was glued to his earthly possessions*. This therefore was the way, not to deceive, but to undeceive him, by discovering to him the sinfulness of his heart; whereas, if he had told him at once, that the way to enter into life was by believing in him, he would indeed have given a more explicit answer to the question; but he would have left him wholly ignorant of his own corruptions, and would have exposed him thereby, to the tenfold danger of making, like Judas, a hypocritical profession.

So our Lord may appear to have done violence when he beat the armed men backward to the ground by his word. But this was done in pity to their souls; it was the very way to convince them, that they were about to seize the Lord's prophet; and thereby to make them desist from their purpose. If they were Jewish soldiers, as surely they were, because they were sent by the chief priests and elders, and Pilate was not yet acquainted with their intentions, they could not but have heard the history of the prophet Elijah, who struck dead two different companies of men, consisting of fifty each, who came to apprehend him. Our Lord struck them to the ground to bring that to their remembrance; and when they would not desist, he resigned himself into their hands. He healed also the high-priest's servant, whose ear Peter had cut off; and, as he had once before rebuked his disciples, when they would have called fire from Heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that had refused him admission—so now he told them, that "all who took the sword, would perish with the sword."

Indeed, if there had been any deceit in Jesus, Judas would gladly have revealed it, as a justification of his own treachery; and if there had been any violence in him, his numerous and watchful enemies would not have failed to lay it to his charge. But, so far was he from using deceit or violence himself, that he has engaged to deliver his people from all, who, in either of these respects, should attempt to injure them, "He shall redeem their souls," says David, "from deceit and violence, [Psalm 72:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.14)."

It appears then that his innocence in every respect stands unimpeached, "he was just such a high-priest as befits us—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Nor was he more clear in the sight of men, than he was in the sight of God; for "he did always those things which pleased his Father;" and thrice did his Father, by an audible voice from Heaven, declare him to be, "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased."

But, however innocent he was, however free both from violence and deceit—yet he was not dealt with as innocent either by God or man; for, as his own countrymen treated him with the utmost barbarity—so even his heavenly Father acted towards him, as if he had been the greatest of all criminals; as we shall see by considering,

***~~II. The conduct of his Father towards him.~~***

We must acknowledge that there is something inexpressibly awful, and deeply mysterious, in the declaration before us; nevertheless it will be found literally true, that, notwithstanding the delight which the Father must of necessity have taken in the immaculate Jesus, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him."

That his heavenly Father did inflict punishment upon him, even these words indisputably prove; as also do the words which immediately follow, "he has put him to grief." There is also in other parts of Scripture abundant evidence to confirm it; for, all that either men or devils did, was not only by his permission, but by his express commission. The Father "spared not his Son, but delivered him up;" and though the Jews took him, and by wicked hands crucified and slew him—yet Peter says, he was delivered up "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

Indeed, how otherwise shall we account for his agony in the garden! If it was produced by devils, still they "could have had no power against him, except it had been given to them from above."

And what shall we say to that bitter lamentation which he uttered upon the cross! The complaint arose, not from any pains of body, but from the desertion and wrath which his soul experienced from his heavenly Father—then the Father "bruised him." This expression alludes to the holy incense mentioned in Exodus, "The Lord said unto Moses, Take sweet spices with pure incense, and you shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you; and it shall be unto you most holy, [Exodus 30:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 30.34), [36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exodus 30.36)." Before these spices could ascend up to God as incense, or be worthy to be laid up in the tabernacle, they were to be "beaten very small;" and in the same manner was Jesus to be bruised, before the incense of his merits could be accepted, or his own person be received into the tabernacle of the Most High.

This was by far the most distressing part of our Savior's sufferings; nor could we account for his behavior under them, unless we believed, that they were inflicted by his heavenly Father; for many martyrs have endured all that men could inflict, not only with resignation, but with joy and triumph. But here we see no less a person than the Son of God exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, at the very apprehension of his sufferings; we hear him crying for the removal of the bitter cup, and bewailing in the most pathetic manner the intenseness of his agony.

Nor did the Father bruise him only, but, as the text intimates, took pleasure in bruising him, "It *pleased*the Lord to bruise him." The word which is here translated, "it pleased," includes in it an idea of delight, and is strongly expressive of pleasure. The import of it is much the same with that which the Apostle uses, when he says, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased;" in conformity with which idea, Jehovah is said to smell a sweet savor from those sacrifices which prefigured the crucified Jesus. Indeed, the same idea, though not so expressly asserted, is supported and confirmed by many other passages of Scripture.

In the very verse following the text, we are informed, that the Father gave him promises on the express condition that Jesus would endure his wrath for man; that "when he should make his soul an offering for sin; he should see a seed, and should prolong his days;" that is, that, on condition of his bearing the wrath due to sinners, many should be everlastingly saved through him, and with him.

In another place we are told that "God sent his Son into the world for this very end, that he might be the atoning sacrifice for our sins;" that is, that he might bear the punishment due to them; Paul also says, that "Christ was made sin, that is, a sin-offering, for us;" and again, that "he was made a curse for us;" all of which passages show that God sent him into the world on purpose to bruise him.

And when the time should come for executing upon his Son all that he was ordained to suffer, the prophet represents the Father as feeling a delight in the very act, "Awake, O my sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord Almighty."

We may further observe, that the Father had from the beginning delighted in the sacrifices which were offered, because *they were types of that sacrifice which Christ in due time should offer upon the cross*. When Noah came out of the ark, he built an altar, and offered a burnt-offering upon it; and then we are told, "The Lord smelled a sweet savor." So, at the very time that our Lord was bruised, the Father was pleased with it; for the Apostle says of Christ, that he "gave himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor;" plainly implying, that as God was pleased with the offering of beasts by Noah, and with the savor of the incense which was composed of bruised spices—so he was pleased with the offering of his own Son, while he was yet being consumed with the fire of divine wrath.

The Father has moreover exalted Jesus in consideration of his having endured the sufferings which he had appointed him. The Apostle having set forth Christ as obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, adds, "Why God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." In the same manner, *every blessing which the Father bestows upon mankind is given as the purchase of Christ's blood, and as the reward of his obedience unto death*. Redemption includes every blessing of the covenant; every evil we are delivered from, and every good which we are ever to possess; and this the Apostle ascribes wholly to the efficacy of Christ's blood, "We have redemption," says he, "through his blood;" and another Apostle says, "You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ."

Now did the Father give promises to his Son on the express condition of his suffering! Did he send him into the world on purpose that he might suffer? Did he delight in other sacrifices as typical of those sufferings? Did he declare, that the offering up of his dear Son was an offering of a sweet-smelling savor? Did he exalt Christ for his sufferings? Does he continually bestow the richest blessings on his very enemies as a reward of those sufferings? Did he do all these things, and shall we not acknowledge that the sufferings of Christ were pleasing to him; or, to use the words of the text, that it pleased the Lord to bruise him!

However, we must not imagine that the mere act of inflicting punishment on his only dear Son could be pleasing to him. No, "He delights in mercy;" and "judgment is his strange work." He is averse to punish even his enemies; and much more his own Son. But there were very sufficient reasons why he should be pleased with bruising his own Son; to illustrate which we shall consider,

***~~III. The reasons of the Divine conduct.~~***

If we expect to account for everything, we shall soon reject the whole of revelation; God never intended that we should; nor indeed is it possible. We know that an ignorant peasant is not able to search out the reasons upon which a profound statesman acts; nor could he even comprehend them, if they were laid before him; and shall we wonder if there be some mysteries in the revelation and in the providence of God which we cannot explore, and which perhaps, if unfolded ever so clearly, would be far above our comprehension? Is not God far more exalted above us, than we can be above our fellow-creatures? *We must therefore proceed with great humility and reverence, when we presume to investigate the reasons by which the all-wise God is actuated*, especially in subjects so deeply mysterious as this which we are now contemplating. However, we will attempt to assign some reasons for his conduct.

**1. God was pleased when he bruised his Son, because the bruising of him was pleasing to his Son**.

As the Father did not take pleasure in inflicting punishment, so neither did the Son take pleasure in enduring it, for itself; the punishment, considered separately from its consequences, was equally grievous to him who inflicted it, and to him who bore it.

But Jesus thirsted for the salvation of men; he knew that it could not be accomplished consistently with the rights of justice and truth, unless he would become their surety; he was well aware of all that he must undergo, if he would stand in the place of sinners. Yet he cheerfully undertook it, "Then said he, Lo, I come; I *delight*to do your will, O my God; yes, your law is within my heart."

And when the time for his sufferings was fully arrived, he drew not back, but said, "Your will be done;" and "for the joy that was set before him" of redeeming so many millions from destruction, "he willingly endured the cross, and despised the shame."

He reproved Peter as an agent of Satan himself, when he attempted to dissuade him from his purpose, "Get behind me, Satan, you are an offence unto me." And, when the time drew near, he so longed for it, that "he was quite straitened until it could be accomplished!"

Therefore, as the Father knew how pleasing it would be to his Son to have the iniquities of mankind laid upon him, he himself found pleasure in laying them upon him; it gave him pleasure to put the finishing hand to that which had been agreed upon between them, and thus to make him "the author of eternal salvation" to all his people!

***~~2. God was pleased with bruising his own Son, because it would prove so beneficial to man.~~***

We are not to imagine that the Son loved us more than the Father; for the Father expressed as much love in giving his Son, as the Son did in giving himself. The Father testified his compassion as much in laying our iniquities on his Son, as the Son did in bearing them in his own body on the tree. The whole work of salvation is the fruit of the Father's love; he pitied us when we fell; he in his own eternal counsels provided a Savior for us before we did fall, yes, before we were brought into existence! He saw how inconceivably miserable we must have been to all eternity if left to ourselves; he therefore covenanted with his Son, and agreed:  
to pardon us,  
to give us peace,  
to adopt us for his children,  
to restore us to our forfeited inheritance,  
and to exalt us to glory—  
if Jesus would, by substituting himself in our place, remove the obstacles which prevented the exercise of his mercy towards us. When therefore these counsels were nearly executed, the Father was pleased with putting the *bitter cup*into the hands of his Son, because it would henceforth be taken out of the hands of all those who should believe in Christ; none should perish but through their obstinate rejection of this Savior; and all, who would embrace him, would be exalted to far higher glory than they would ever have obtained, if they had never fallen!

**3. The Father was pleased with bruising his own Son, because it would put great honor upon the divine law.**We cannot but suppose that God must be concerned for the honor of his own law, because it is a perfect transcript of his own mind and will. This law had been violated and dishonored by the transgression of man; if the sanctions of the law were not enforced, the law itself would be set aside; or, if the sanctions were enforced, still the punishment of the offender would never repair the dishonor done to the law, and the contempt he had poured upon it. But by the sufferings of Jesus "the law was magnified and made honorable."

The *majesty*of the law was manifested in having the Son of God himself subject to it.

The *authority*of the law was established in that its penalties were inflicted even on the Son of God, when he stood in the place of sinners. Therefore no sinner could hope thenceforth to transgress it with impunity.

The purity of the law was declared, in that nothing less than the blood of the Son of God could expiate any transgression against it.

The justice of the law was held forth, in that it did not relax one jot or tittle of its demands, even in favor of the Son of God.

Now when the divine law was to be so magnified by the voluntary sufferings of the Son of God—we cannot wonder that the lawgiver should be pleased; especially as:  
the *majesty*of the law was more fully manifested,  
its *authority*more firmly established,  
its *purity*more conspicuously declared,  
and its justice more *solemnly*displayed  
—by means of the sufferings of the Son of God, than it could have been by the everlasting obedience of angels, or the everlasting misery of the whole human race!

***~~4. The Father was pleased with bruising his own Son, because he himself was thereby transcendently glorified.~~***

God cannot but delight in the manifestation of his own glory; nor did he ever manifest it in such bright colors, as while he was bruising his own Son.

When Judas went out to betray his Master, "Now," said Jesus, "the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in him." In that solemn hour, *the divine perfections, which seemed, as it were, to be at variance—were made to harmonize, and to shine with united splendor*. We are at a loss what to admire most:  
the inflexibility of God's *justice*which required such a sacrifice, or the heights of his *love*which gave it;  
his inviolable truth in *punishing*sin, or the extent of his mercy in *pardoning*the sinner;  
the holiness of his nature in manifesting such indignation against iniquity, or his wisdom and goodness in providing such a way of deliverance from it.

Every attribute of God is incomparably more glorified than it could have been in any other way: *mercy*shines in the way of satisfying the demands of justice, and *justice*shinesin the way of exercising mercy. This view of God was not more new to man, than it was to the angels in Heaven; and when a ray of this glory shone forth at the incarnation of our Lord, the angels burst forth in joyful acclamations, and sang, "Glory to God in the highest!" Since the bruising of our Lord tended so much to the manifestation of the divine glory, no doubt the Father was well pleased with it.

We might assign more reasons, if it were necessary; but we trust that these are sufficient for the justifying of the Father's conduct towards his Son. If, as has been shown, the Father saw that the bruising of his Son would be:  
pleasing to his Son,  
beneficial to man,  
honorable to his law,  
and glorious to himself  
—it can surely be no imputation on the Father's character to say, "It pleased him to bruise his Son."

Amidst the many reflections which naturally arise from this subject, such as *the greatness of the Father's love*(in that "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"), and *the danger of unbelief*(in that, if we yield to it, the Father's wrath will infallibly fall on us [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 16.16).), and others too numerous to mention, we shall confine our attention to one; namely,

***~~How great must be the evil of sin!~~***

We have seen the immaculate Jesus bruised under the weight of his Father's wrath, and his Father pleased with bruising him—and from whence did this arise? From the evil, the dreadful evil, of sin!

Sin had introduced confusion into the divine government;  
sin had set the divine perfections at variance;  
sin had dishonored the divine law;  
sin brought the Son of God from Heaven;  
sin put him to death;  
and, had he not died, sin would have sunk us all into the lowest abyss of misery forever!

*Sin reduced God himself to the necessity of delighting either to punish us—or to bruise his own Son.*What must sin be, when such are the effects arising from it! And yet how lightly do we think of sin! how unconcerned are we about it!

But did our Surety think lightly of sin, when he cried, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

Did the Father think lightly of sin, when he was bruising his own Son?

Do they think lightly of sin who are now receiving the wages of it in Hell?

If nothing less than the blood of Christ could expiate sin, is it a small evil?

If sin crushed even *Jesus*with its weight, though he had none of his own sin to answer for—shall *we*find it easy to bear, who are so laden with iniquities?

Let us but look at sin as it appears in the death of Jesus. Let us recollect that he was God equal with the Father; and that yet he almost sunk under the load; let us recollect this, I say, and we shall surely begin to tremble, lest we should lie under the weight of sin forever.

We never shall see sin aright, until we view it in the tears and groans, the blood and agonies, of the Son of God.

There at once we behold both the evil of sin, and the remedy for sin. If we look at sin in any other view, we may dread its consequences; but we shall never hate its malignity. But if we view of sin in the dying Jesus, we shall be delivered from the fear of consequences, because the guilt of it was expiated by him; and we shall begin to loath it as a hateful and accursed evil.

This is the only source of sincere, evangelical repentance; nor until we "look on Him whom we have pierced, shall we ever mourn aright for sin, or be in bitterness for it, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Let us then look at sin in this light, and we shall soon be like-minded with the Father; we shall be pleased with the sufferings of Jesus; they will be our hope, our plea, our joy, our boast; and we shall exultingly say with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

***~~#973~~***

***~~CHRIST'S DEATH A CONDITION OF OUR SALVATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.10)~~***

KJV. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

NIV. "Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

*There are many apparent contradictions in the Holy Scriptures, which, when properly understood, are perfectly consistent with each other.*The redemption of our souls is continually represented as the freest gift of God; yet the very term redemption implies that a price is paid. But here is no real inconsistency; because that, which to us is as free as the light we behold, or the air we breathe, was dearly purchased by our blessed Lord; and the Apostle himself combines these ideas, saying, "We are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The truth is, that eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ; but, before it could be thus freely given consistently with the divine perfections, it was necessary that a sufficient atonement should be made for sin; and, in order to the liberating of the debtor, the debt must be discharged by his Surety. Hence, when our Lord undertook to save us, a condition was imposed upon him, and the promise of success in his undertaking was suspended on his performance of that condition. The words before us lead us to consider,

***~~I. The condition imposed.~~***

To understand the true nature of this condition, it is necessary that we should pay attention to the offerings that were made under the law. If any person had sinned, even through ignorance, he was bound to bring an offering in order to make atonement for his sin. This offering was to be a bullock, or a male or female goat, or a lamb, according to the quality of the offender. He was to lay his hands upon the head of the offering, in token that he confessed himself to be deserving of death, and that he transferred his guilt to the creature that was to suffer in his stead. The creature was then killed; its blood was poured out at the foot of the altar, some of it having been previously put upon the horns of the altar; and then its fat was burnt upon the altar; and God smelling a sweet savor from it, accepted it on behalf of the offerer.

Now this will show what Christ was to do. He had undertaken to save man; he must therefore come and put himself in the place of man; and present himself before God to suffer all that was due to our transgressions. But whereas the animals could suffer only in body, Christ was to suffer both in body and soul, and to present his whole person a sacrifice for sin.

In consideration of this sacrifice every sinner in the universe was to have liberty to transfer his guilt to him, and, on so doing, to find acceptance with God through him. Thus he was to become the sinner's substitute, or, as the Apostle expresses it, "to be made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But what *necessity*was there for any such condition? Why must God's only dear Son become a man, and offer up himself as a sacrifice for sin?

To answer this important inquiry, we observe, first, that **man, having once transgressed the law of God, could never afterwards be justified by obedience to it.**The law denounced a curse against transgressors, but made no provision for their restoration to the Divine favor. It made no mention of repentance or amendment; it spoke nothing of pardoning mercy; it simply required obedience, and inflicted the penalty of death on the disobedient. From that time "there could not be any law given whereby we might have life; for if there could, God tells us that truly righteousness would have been by the law."

If therefore man ever was to be saved at all, there was a necessity that some other plan should be devised, whereby the law should take its course and yet the transgressor be rescued from condemnation. This could not be done unless a proper substitute for man could be found, who would at once *satisfy all the demands of law and justice, and bring in a perfect righteousness that would be transferable to man for his justification before God*.

Hence, in the next place, arose a further necessity for the death of Christ, namely, that **there was no other one found in the whole creation, who was capable of undertaking so great a work**. As for "the blood of bulls and of goats—it was not possible that that could take away sin;" "nor could any man redeem his brother," or even himself. If an angel, or all the angels of Heaven, had attempted it, they must have failed; for in the very first instance they must have suffered eternal death. This was the penalty due to sin; and if it had been inflicted on them, they must have been in the state of the fallen angels to all eternity, seeing that there never would come a time, when it could be said, that the law was fully satisfied. Besides, their obedience to the law, even supposing it to have been meritorious in the sight of God (which it could not be, because, "after having done all that was commanded them, they would be only unprofitable servants"), they could merit only for themselves; *the righteousness of a mere creature could never have been so excellent as to deserve eternal happiness and glory for a sinful world*.

We do not indeed presume to limit God, and to say what he might or might not have done, if he had pleased. But according to the light given us in the Scripture we are warranted to say, that, if any lesser sacrifice would have answered all the purposes of his glory and of man's salvation, he never would have sent "the man that was his fellow." *He would not have given his Son out of his bosom to die for us, if the death of a mere creature would have sufficed.*

This leads us to notice a further ground of Christ's sacrifice, which was, that **in it there was a sufficiency for the salvation of the whole world**.

Christ being God as well as man, there was an infinite value in his sufferings; his sufferings for a space of time, were equivalent to the sufferings of the whole world to all eternity.

There was also an infinite value in his obedience; so that it could merit, not for himself only, but for others, yes, for all the myriads of sinners who should trust in it. The penalty of the law being inflicted on him, Divine justice was satisfied; and scope was opened for the exercise of mercy. The sinner's debt being paid, the sinner could be discharged in perfect consistency with God's truth and holiness.

Hence then it was that "help was laid upon One so mighty;" and that such a condition was imposed upon him.

As to what is said of the Father "making his soul an offering," the words may be translated either in the second or the third person; if in the second, they relate to the Father's laying of our iniquities upon his Son; if in the third (as they are in the marginal translation, which we rather prefer), they relate to Christ's voluntarily making himself an offering.

But in addition to what we have spoken concerning the nature and necessity of the condition imposed on Christ, it will be proper that we state, in a few words, what the condition itself implied. It implied, that there is no salvation but by the death of Christ. It has before been observed that such a condition would never have been imposed, if man could have been saved by any other means; and this is confirmed by that express declaration of the Apostle, "There is no other name given under Heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." It implied further, that every sinner must actually present, as it were, to God the blood of Christ, as his only plea for mercy and acceptance. He must put his hand on the head of his offering, confessing his deservings of death, renouncing every self-righteous hope, and trusting simply in the sacrifice once made upon the cross.

Lastly, it implied, that **this one offering, thus presented, shall be available for the very chief of sinners**. God's end in sending his Son was, not only to save man, but to glorify himself in man's salvation. It is true, that all his perfections are glorified in the salvation of the most righteous; but the efficacy of this atonement, together with God's love in providing it, and his mercy in accepting it—are more conspicuous, in proportion as those savingly interested in it are redeemed from deeper condemnation. To have imposed such a condition for the purpose of saving a few only of the more worthy characters, would have given us reason to apprehend, either that the mercy of God was very limited, or that there was not a sufficiency in the Redeemer's merits for the redemption of more atrocious sinners. But as these apprehensions are false and groundless, we may consider the very condition itself as importing that the offering of Christ would be accepted for all who would trust in it.

Such was the condition imposed on God's only dear Son, when he undertook to mediate for fallen man, "He must make his own soul an offering for sin," and *die in the stead of those whom he would redeem*.

The benefit arising from his performance of that condition is seen in,

***~~II. The promises suspended on it.~~***

Those specified in my text refer to three things:  
the furtherance of man's welfare;  
the advancement of Christ's glory; and  
the accomplishment of the Father's eternal purposes.

**The furtherance of man's welfare entirely depended on Christ's performance of this condition.**He could never have "seen a seed," nor could one of all the human race ever have been saved, without it. Our Lord himself both confirms and illustrates this by a beautiful comparison. "Truly, truly, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground, and dies, it abides alone; but, if it dies, it brings forth much fruit, [John 12:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.24)." By dying he was to obtain a people whom he was to have forever as his "purchased possession." It had been foretold respecting him that "a seed should serve him; that all the ends of the earth should remember themselves and turn unto him; and that they should be counted to him for a generation, [Psalm 22:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.27); [Psalm 22:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.30)."

By conversion they were to stand related to him as his children, as being begotten by his Word and Spirit, and as receiving through him a heavenly inheritance. These he was to "see." And behold, while he was yet in the very act of offering himself, he did see the pledge and first-fruits of his future harvest; in the very hour of death he converted the *dying thief*, and took him that very day to dwell with him in Paradise, as a monument of his victorious grace, and of his redeeming love.

Nor had he long poured out his soul, when lo, another convert was born to God! No sooner did *the Centurion* who had been ordered to superintend the execution, behold the manner of his death, and the signs and wonders that attended it, than he exclaimed, "Truly this was a righteous man, this was the Son of God!"

In the space of a few days thousands confessed his power, and through the operation of his Spirit, became sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Soon the handful of grain cast on the top of the mountains sprang up like the piles of grass for number, and the cedars of Lebanon for strength, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16).

Even to the present hour his family is increasing in every quarter of the globe; and soon the time shall arrive, when "a nation shall be born in a day," and that word of his shall be literally fulfilled, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And when all the number of his elect shall have been gathered to him in successive ages, he will come and summon them all into his immediate presence, that he may rejoice in them, and they in him, forever and ever.

**The advancement of his own glory was to be another fruit of the accomplishment of his engagements**, "He shall prolong his days." This cannot relate to him as God, seeing that his divine nature necessarily exists in one unsuccessive eternity. But as man and as Mediator, he was to "prolong his days" in a state of glorious advancement, as a reward for terminating his days on earth under such circumstances of humiliation and abasement. This also had been foretold in the inspired volume, "he shall live; his name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed! [Psalm 72:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.15); [Psalm 72:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.17)."

Again, in another Psalm, "You go before him with the blessings of goodness; you set a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life of you, and you gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever, [Psalm 21:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 21.1-5)." Accordingly, in spite of the stone, the seal, the guards, he rose triumphant, and ascended up far above all principalities and powers, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There shall he remain seated on his glorious throne, the one source of blessedness to all his creatures, until he shall come in the clouds of Heaven, and take them to himself, that they may be one fold under one Shepherd for evermore!

But all this glory was conditionally promised; he was first to become "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and then he was to be highly exalted, and to have a name given him above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ was Lord, to the glory of God the Father! [Philippians 2:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.8-11)."

**The accomplishment of his Father's eternal purposes was to be yet a further part of his reward**, "The pleasure of the Lord was to prosper in his hands." The pleasure of Jehovah, yes, his chief delight, is to save sinners. This was the end he proposed to himself in his eternal counsels, when he entered into covenant with his dear Son. He has given proof of this, in that he has sworn, "he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live!" "He wills that all should be saved and come to the acknowledgment of the truth;" and, with respect to his elect, "it is his good pleasure absolutely to give them the kingdom! [Luke 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.32)."

Nor, if we would entreat him to convert and save our souls, can we use any more suitable expressions than those of the Apostle, who prays, "that he would fulfill in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, [2 Thessalonians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.11)." But his sending of his Son, in order "that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life," is such an evidence of his love to sinners, as supersedes the necessity of any other proof, and must fill the universe with everlasting wonder and astonishment!

Now, as before the incarnation of Christ, the salvation of men was effected by the Father; so, since the coming of Christ, it has been carried on more immediately by the Son. During the first four thousand years of the world the work of conversion went on but slowly; there were few, very few, who experienced the saving efficacy of divine grace. But, when the office of rescuing sinners from the power of Satan came to be devolved on Jesus, then, according to the stipulation in the text, "the pleasure of the Lord was to prosper in his hands."

And how marvelously has it prospered, notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils! There is not a day, an hour, a moment, wherein he is not beholding with joy the success of his endeavors:  
the ignorant are enlightened,  
the weak are established,  
the doubting are comforted, and  
all the hosts of the redeemed are prepared for glory!

Nor shall his success be ever interrupted. To the latest period of time he shall go forth conquering and to conquer, until all his enemies are put under his feet, and all his ransomed ones are seated on thrones of glory.

***~~And now what should we learn from this subject?~~***

Surely we must see in it,

***~~1. The salvation of man is a difficult work!~~***

Was there no other way whereby salvation could be effected?

Could there be no remission of sin without shedding of blood?

Must that blood be the blood of God's only Son? Must he take our nature and offer himself without spot to God, before our peace could be made, or a way be opened for our restoration to happiness!

Go, then, you careless ones, who think all concern about the soul to be superfluous; go read the terms of this covenant; and see whether the salvation of man is so easy to be effected as you have hitherto imagined; see what a stupendous effort of wisdom and love was necessary before there was even a possibility for one of us to be saved! If such exertions were necessary on the part of the Father and of Christ, do you suppose that there is no occasion for exertion on your part? Did Christ purchase for you not merely an exemption from death and Hell, but also from all solicitude about your eternal interests? Yes, rather, do not his labors for you show how you ought to labor for yourselves!

Awake, then, from your slumbers, and work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You feel the need of laboring for the bread that perishes; begin then to labor in good earnest for that bread which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you.

***~~2. Next observe, How wonderful was the love of Christ in undertaking such things for the effecting of your salvation!~~***

When God declared that he had no pleasure in sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and that he must have a far nobler sacrifice than that of beasts to satisfy the demands of his justice—the Savior instantly undertook for us, saying, "Behold! I come to do your will, O God; I delight to do your will, however painful the consequences of it may be to myself; yes, your law is within my heart." He perfectly knew what it was to make his soul an offering for sin; he did not undertake it hastily, or without being apprised of the full extent of his engagements. But foreseeing all the shame and misery that he must endure for our redemption, he undertook to effect it; nor ever receded, until he had accomplished all that was needful for it. Never can we sufficiently admire this astonishing love. O let us fix our minds upon it, and labor, if possible, to comprehend its heights and depths! Though "it passes the knowledge" of men and angels—yet shall our meditations on it be sweet, and our sense of it an foretaste of Heaven itself.

***~~3. Lastly, How cheerfully should we submit to any conditions for his glory—who submitted to such conditions for our good!~~***

What is it that our God requires of us? It is simply this: that we should repent, believe, obey. And shall such conditions appear hard? If God had required that, in order to our final happiness, every one of us should endure the miseries of Hell a thousand years—then we ought to have embraced his offers of salvation with gratitude and joy; for, what are a thousand years in comparison with eternity? But when he only enjoins us to repent of those iniquities for which the Savior died; and to believe in him whom the Father has set forth for an atoning sacrifice; and to obey his precepts, which are holy, just, and good—shall these injunctions be thought grievous?

Shall we turn our back upon him, saying, "If I cannot be saved without all this trouble, I will not be saved at all?" Well indeed might Jesus, when the conditions of our salvation were proposed to him, have replied, "No! if man cannot be saved on lower terms than these, let him perish. But what lower terms could we wish for? Yes, what is there in all our duties, which does not tend even to our present happiness? Let us then embrace the Gospel with all thankfulness; and let us cheerfully comply with all that God has required of us, knowing assuredly that he is faithful who has promised, and that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

***~~#974~~***

***~~CHRIST'S ATONEMENT IN HIS PEOPLE~~***

**[Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11)**

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

The prospect of saving a ruined world was a strong inducement with our Lord to undertake the office of mediating between God and them, and afforded him rich consolation under the heavy trials he was called to endure in the execution of that office. And now that his expectations are in a measure realized, he feels an inexpressible delight in a retrospect upon all that he had done and suffered for our sake.

It had been declared in the foregoing verse, that, after making his soul an offering for sin, he would see a seed, who would be, as it were, his spiritual offspring. In the words before us, the same promise is repeated, though with a remarkable variation in the terms; and it is foretold that, in the accomplishment of this promise, he should feel the most abundant satisfaction.

The promise of a successful outcome to his undertaking having been already considered, we shall wave everything relating to that, and make some remarks upon the representation which is here given of believers, and the satisfaction which our blessed Lord takes in them in that particular view.

***~~I. The representation here given of believers.~~***

Of all the numberless descriptions given of believers in the Holy Scriptures, there is not any one so interesting as that before us. Similar ideas indeed are suggested in many passages, where mankind are spoken of as begotten of God, and as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; but there is a tenderness in the expression before us, which well deserves our most attentive consideration.

The image of a travailing woman is very commonly used by the inspired writers to illustrate different topics. As applied to the ungodly, it expresses the fear and terror, the distress and anguish, which they either experience under the Divine chastisements, [Isaiah 26:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.16-18). [Jeremiah 30:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.6-7); or will experience, when death and judgment shall come upon them, [1 Thessalonians 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.3). As applied to the godly, it declares the relation which they bear to the church, [Isaiah 54:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.1) with [Galatians 4:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.27), to ministers, [Galatians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.19), and to Christ himself, the text. It is in this last view that we are now called to notice it.

Without entering too minutely into so delicate a subject we may observe, that believers are justly represented as the fruit of the Redeemer's travail—both on account of their being brought into the family of God by means of his sufferings; and on account of his watching over them continually with more than maternal care and anxiety.

*It is solely by means of his sufferings that they are brought into the family of God.* They were indeed prepared from eternity in the womb of the divine counsels; they were "given to Christ," and "chosen in him from the foundation of the world! [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2), [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4)." Long before the Gentiles were actually called, our Lord spoke of his having many who were not of the Jewish fold, whom yet he must in due season bring into his church, [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.16)." And the Apostle Paul, though he was so long ignorant of God, and a bitter persecutor of the Church—yet speaks of himself as a chosen vessel, that had been "separated unto God from the womb, [Galatians 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.15)."

ut that whereby men are really brought into the family of God, is the crucifixion of Christ. If Christ had not "borne their sins in his own body on the tree," and "made his soul an offering for sin," then not one of them could ever have enjoyed the Divine favor, not one of them could ever have presumed to cry, Abba, Father I But by his stripes they obtain healing, and peace by his chastisements, and life by his death. By his vicarious sufferings they are exempt from all the penal effects of sin, and have the power and privilege of becoming sons of God, [John 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.12). To this one source is the whole of their salvation continually traced in the inspired volume.

Are they *redeemed* from the curse of the law? It is by his having become a curse for them, [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 3.13).

Are they made the righteousness of God in Christ? It is by his having been first made a sin-offering for them, 2 Corinthians 5:21. The troubles of his soul, whether in the garden or on the cross, were the travail, of which their salvation is the fruit. And as a parent, looking on her numerous family, may call to mind the pangs which she endured at each successive birth; so may the Lord Jesus, when he beholds the various members of his family, well recollect the sufferings which he endured by means of each; there not being so much as one among them, who has not occasioned him many bitter pangs; *not one for whom he did not endure the wrath of an offended God*.

But believers may also be called the travail of the Redeemer's soul on account of his watching over them with more than maternal care and anxiety. Paul speaks of himself, not only as having travailed in birth with the Galatian Christians at their first conversion, but as "travailing in birth again with them, until Christ should be formed in them." He saw that they were in danger of being drawn away from faith in Christ by the false teachers who had crept in among them; and he illustrates his anxious concern for their welfare by this affecting image.

Well therefore may we apply it unto Christ, whose love to the very least of his children so infinitely exceeds all that the most exalted creature is capable of feeling. He sees all the dangers to which they are exposed, and all the perverseness which they manifest. He well knows how much more ready they are to follow the counsels of their deceitful adversary, than to adhere resolutely to the truth of God.

How often, alas! do they grieve his Spirit by their evil deeds!

How often do they even "crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame," by acting unworthily of the relation they bear to him!

If even earthly parents are sometimes so distressed by the follies and indiscretions, or by the troubles and miseries of their dear children, that all the pangs of child-birth were as nothing in comparison with the sorrows they afterwards conflict with, much more may we consider the sympathy of Christ in our afflictions, and his grief at our misconduct, as a renewal of the troubles he sustained on Calvary.

Nor are his labors destitute of their desired effect, "he heals those who are sick, and binds up those who are broken, and brings back those who were driven away, [Ezekiel 34:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.15-16)," and, by his almighty power, "keeps them unto his heavenly kingdom." Thus, in whatever light we view believers, whether as purchased by his blood, or as preserved by his grace, we see how just is the representation given of them, as the fruit of the Redeemer's soul-travail.

While we stand amazed at this endearing description of the Lord's people, let us consider,

***~~II. The satisfaction which Christ takes in them in this particular view.~~***

Our blessed Lord himself, alerting his disciples of the *troubles*which they were to sustain by means of his removal from them, and the permanent *joys*that they would afterwards experience, as soon as he should renew his visits to them, illustrates his discourse by the very simile before us, "A woman," says he, "when she is in travail, has sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a son is born into the world. You now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you! [John 16:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.21-22)." Such is the satisfaction also which Christ himself is here represented as feeling, in the sight of those who are born to God through him.

He is satisfied, first, when he beholds any penitent sinner returning unto God. Were there but one in the whole universe, and he the lowest and the vilest of the human race, who should "bethink himself, saying, What have I done?" and should tremble at the denunciations of God's wrath, and turn to the Lord with sorrow and contrition, our compassionate Lord would instantly fix his eyes on him; according to that promise, "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word! [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2)."

When his people of old began to repent of their transgressions, he was attentive to the first motions of their hearts, and declares to us with what pleasure he noticed the smallest risings of good in them, "Ephraim said, What have I to do any more with idols!" upon which the Lord immediately adds with exultation, "I have heard him, and observed him, [Hosea 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 14.8)."

Just so, on another occasion, as though he had been listening unobserved to the lamentations of his servant, he says, "Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; You have chastised me, and I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; Turn me, and I shall be turned." Upon which his whole soul is moved with pity; and he exclaims, "Is not this my dear son? is he not a pleasant child? for since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still; yes my affections are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord! [Jeremiah 31:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.18); [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20)."

To illustrate the pleasure which he takes in the return of one sinner unto God, he expatiated upon it in three different parables. He sets forth a shepherd rejoicing over a lost sheep, and calling upon all his friends and neighbors to sympathize with him on so joyful an occasion. Then, changing the illustration to that of a woman finding a piece of silver after a long and careful search; and afterwards, to that of a father receiving his prodigal child, and making merry with him on account of the happy alteration of his state, and the blessed change wrought upon his soul, he declares, in terms as strong as language can afford, the delight he feels, when one single person is recovered unto God through him. He forgets at once all the labor and travail he has endured, or rather he looks back upon it with most heart-felt satisfaction, as soon as he sees it brought to a successful outcome.

**He is satisfied, next, when he sees his redeemed people walking uprightly with God**. The pleasure, which a parent enjoys at the first sight of her new-born infant, is increased, when she beholds it growing up to maturity in the full enjoyment of all its faculties, and the uniform discharge of all its duties. Thus our "Lord takes pleasure in his people;" and every grace they exercise, every service they perform, every sacrifice they offer, is "pleasing and acceptable in his sight." The beloved Apostle knew no greater joy than to see his children walk in truth. So our Lord, when his people grow in grace, and make their profiting to appear, "rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love, and joys over them with singing, [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)."

So delighted is he with the view of them, that "he rejoices over them to do them good," and engages "with his whole heart and with his whole soul," in securing to them the everlasting possession of his heavenly kingdom! [Jeremiah 32:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.41).

Though he is so high—yet has he respect unto them, "coming to them," "manifesting himself to them as he does not unto the world" in the most intimate and endearing manner, shedding abroad his love in their hearts, und maintaining fellowship with them, as a parent with her dear children.

This is opened by the prophet in terms so accommodated to the text, and so beautifully descriptive of the truth before us, that we cannot refrain from quoting his words. After repeating several times that Zion should travail in birth, and have a numerous issue, Christ calls on all of them to rejoice in their happy lot, and "to suck and be satisfied with the bosoms of her consolation;" and then in direct reference to himself, he says, "as one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted, [Isaiah 66:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.13)."

But most of all will our adorable Lord be satisfied, when he shall behold all his family surrounding his throne in glory. While they are here, he is too often grieved with them, and constrained to hide his face from them. But when they shall be exalted to Heaven, there will be an end of all their imperfections; they will all be pure as God is pure, and holy as God is holy; they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father; never to suffer an eclipse, never to set again. If a parent finds all her joys consummated, when she sees those with whom she has travailed, and over whom she has so long watched, comfortably at last settled in the world—then how must Jesus rejoice, when he sees all his children settled beyond the reach of harm, in the full enjoyment of that kingdom which was provided for them from the foundation of the world! *With what satisfaction must he reflect upon the travail of his soul, when he shall see myriads, countless as the sands upon the sea-shore, surrounding his throne, and hear them all acknowledging with one voice, that they were washed from their sins in his blood, and that all their happiness is the fruit of his obedience unto death!*

If, even in the days of his humiliation, he was so transported with this joy set before him, that, in consideration of it, he cheerfully endured the cross, and despised the shame—then much more, when he shall see the full accomplishment of his gracious purposes, will he look back upon his troubles with delight. He will then wholly occupy himself in making them happy, "feeding them" with all the fruits of Paradise, and "leading them to living fountains of waters," that they may drink of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore! [Revelation 7:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.17) and [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11); [Psalm 36:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.8)."

***~~By way of improving this subject, we may further observe,~~***

***~~1. How must the Lord Jesus be grieved when he sees sinners utterly regardless of him!~~***

Surely if a mother, after all her pain and anguish, beholds a lifeless corpse where she had expected a living child—her disappointment must be great. And must not Jesus be grieved, when he beholds "those, for whom he died, perishing" in their sins? If when the Jews alone were offered to him as the fruit of his travail, he so regretted the loss of the Gentile world, that he exclaimed, "Then have I labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing, and in vain! [Isaiah 49:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.4)"—then surely it must be painful to him, after having had a promise of the heathen also for his inheritance, to see myriads, even of his professed followers, as unconcerned about him, as if he had never come into the world.

And are there not many such among us?

Many, whose voice he never yet heard in fervent prayer?

Many, who have never yet expressed any desire after him, any concern about him? The Apostle Paul could appeal to God that he had "great heaviness, and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren's sake;" and Jeremiah, in the view of the troubles that were coming on his nation, cried out, "I am pained at my very heart!"—then much more therefore must the compassionate Jesus, who wept and prayed for his very murderers, be afflicted at the guilt and danger of the unbelieving world. It is true, that, strictly speaking, he is incapable of sorrow in his present state; but the Scripture, to accommodate itself to our feeble apprehensions, represents him as exercising human passions, because, with respect to us, he will act as if he were either gratified by our attention, or grieved by our neglect.

Careless sinners are spoken of as grieving and vexing his Holy Spirit, yes, moreover, as crucifying him afresh, and trampling under foot his precious blood.

Do not let then such aggravated guilt be found in us. Let us not so requite our gracious and adorable benefactor. He yet waits to be gracious unto us; he seeks us, as he did the Samaritan woman, that vile notorious adulteress—that he may turn us from the error of our ways, and save our souls! And, as on that occasion "he had food to eat which the world knew not of, [John 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.18); [John 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.29); [John 4:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.32)," so will his soul be refreshed and comforted with the first prospect of delivering us from sin and death.

***~~2. What obligations lie on all of us to repent and turn to God!~~***

There is one way, and only one, in which we can afford any satisfaction to our blessed Lord; and that is, by going to him for his benefits, and receiving at his hands the blessings he has purchased for us. And shall we hesitate to do this? Shall not a sense of gratitude impel us, strengthened as it is, and confirmed by a concern for our eternal interests?

If our Lord had required some great thing of us, ought we not to do it? How much more then when he only says: Wash and be clean! Had he required that we should spend our whole lives in such a state of pain and travail as he himself endured, we ought gladly to comply with his will, and account ourselves happy in such an opportunity of testifying our love to him. But when he desires only, that we should seek our own best interests, and declares, that he finds his happiness in making us happy, we should turn to him without delay, and give ourselves up to him without reserve.

Hear his own word, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy." If you cannot love him as you would—yet if you can fear him. If you cannot rejoice in an assurance of his mercy—yet if you can only hope in it, you will thereby afford him pleasure. And will you think this too much to do for him who travailed, as it were, in birth for you?

The deeper our contrition, the more exalted will be the joy that follows it. Let us then look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness for our manifold transgressions. So shall Jesus be recompensed for all that he has endured for us; and we shall participate in his glory and blessedness forever and ever!

***~~3. How securely may we commit ourselves into the Savior's hands!~~***

If a child can be safely trusted with anyone, surely it may with her who travailed in birth with it, and who must therefore be most deeply interested in its welfare.

But infinitely more secure are we in the hands of Jesus, as he himself tells us by the prophet, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? *Can such a monster be found?*Yes, says our Lord, they may forget; yet will not I forget you. Behold, you are engraved on the palms of my hands, [Isaiah 49:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14-16)." We need only commit ourselves to him, and he will approve himself faithful to his promises. He will keep us by his power; he will "guide us by his eye;" "he will carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those which are with young." "Nor shall any weapon formed against us prosper." "Our place of defense shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given us, and our water shall be sure." He will "keep us as his garden; he will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, he will keep it day and night."

Let us then "commit ourselves to him in well-doing, as into the hands of a faithful Redeemer," assured that he will "keep that which we have committed to him, and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom!"

***~~#975~~***

***~~THE MEANS OF OUR JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.11)~~***

"By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

It is not possible to conceive a more difficult question for unenlightened reason to resolve, or one in the resolution of which mankind are more deeply interested, than this: How shall a sinner be justified before God? Every man feels himself to be a sinner, and has, in a greater or less degree, a sentence of condemnation within his own bosom. And the more he considers his state, the more he feels an anxiety to know how he may escape the punishment he deserves, and secure the favor of his God and Judge.

The words before us remove all doubt upon this subject; they represent Christ as God's servant, sent and commissioned for this very end, to justify sinners by the knowledge of himself; and, while they thus declare the *means*of our justification, they specify also the *ground*of it; for however gratuitous this blessing is, as it respects us, it is altogether procured for us by the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God.

Let us consider, then,

***~~I. The means of our justification before God.~~***

Christ is the person spoken of throughout this whole chapter; and here, as in the preceding chapter, verse 13, he is denominated God's "servant." This title belongs to him only in his mediatorial capacity; for in his own nature, Christ is one with the Father, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal. The appellation of "righteous," which is here applied to him, is of peculiar force in this connection. He was eminently righteous above every creature in earth or Heaven. Of fallen *men*, "there is none righteous, no, not one." And though the *angels*are holy—yet is their righteousness not originally of, and from, themselves; it is the gift of God; nor is it immutable, seeing that many have fallen from it; and the preservation of those who maintain their first estate, is also the effect of God's distinguishing grace. But *Christ is essentially, eternally, and immutably righteous.*

Moreover, *angels*are righteous for themselves alone; but Christ is righteous for us, having fulfilled all righteousness with the express view to impute that righteousness to us, so that we may have a righteousness wherein to appear before God, and God may be just in justifying us, [Romans 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.19); [Romans 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.26). The particular application of the term "righteous" to him as justifying sinners, shows, that it is to be understood in this extent, and as equivalent to that name which is elsewhere given him, "The Lord our Righteousness."

To "justify" sinners is the work assigned to him by the Father. It is his office to take even the most sinful of the human race, and so to purge them from all iniquity that they may stand before God without spot or blemish, and be regarded by him as though they never had sinned at all. This is a work which none other can perform; nor, *if God had not revealed a way in which salvation would be accomplished, could we have conceived it possible that such a marvelous work should ever be done?*

By what means he makes us partakers of this blessing, we are told in the words before us; it is "by or through the knowledge of himself"—he enables us to behold him as he is revealed in the Scriptures, and leads us to embrace him as our all-sufficient portion. *Knowledge in general has its seat in the understanding only; but the knowledge of Christ is seated both in the understanding and the heart*. Hence, in order to be justified by Christ, we must not only view him as appointed of God to save us, but to this theoretical knowledge we must add the approbation of our hearts; we must have such a full persuasion of our inability to save ourselves, and of his sufficiency to save us, as determines us to renounce all dependence on an arm of flesh, and to glory in him alone. This is the knowledge of which our Lord speaks, when he says, "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent;" and it is by this alone that any sinner can be justified.

Now by bringing men thus to know him and believe in him, he has justified many in all ages, and is yet daily communicating to thousands the blessings of salvation. It is true that, in comparison with the ungodly world, the justified have been but few in number, a little flock, a small remnant. But in the last day, when they shall all be collected together, they will be numberless like the stars of Heaven, or the sands upon the sea shore.

Nor is anyone, however vile, excluded from the hope of justification, provided he be willing to embrace this Savior. On the contrary, if all the people in the universe would but look to him for the ends and purposes for which he is revealed in the gospel, they would instantly experience in their souls what the wounded Israelites experienced in their bodies, when they looked to the bronze serpent in the wilderness—they should be delivered from all the fatal consequences of their sins, and be endued with spiritual and eternal life.

To mark more clearly the connection between the means and the end attained by them, it will be proper to advert to,

***~~II. The ground of our justification.~~***

The way appointed for our restoration to the divine favor is not a mere arbitrary institution of God; there is a fitness in it, and a suitableness which deserves peculiar notice. It may be asked: Whence comes it that a knowledge of Christ should be the means of a sinner's acceptance with God? What has Christ done, that he should be authorized to justify sinners by means so inadequate to their end? In other words, supposing these means effectual to their end, what is the ground on which they become so? To these questions the text affords us a precise and satisfactory answer.

The vicarious sacrifice of our blessed Lord has been repeatedly insisted on in the foregoing parts of this prophecy; and here it is again spoken of as the ground on which he justifies those who believe in him. For the elucidating of this point let two things be considered:

**First, The sin-atoning sacrifice of Christ removes all the obstacles to our salvation.**When man had fallen, there were many things which seemed to render his restoration impossible. The law, which he had broken, denounced a curse against him; nor could the lawgiver, however desirous he might be to rescind his decree, revoke his Word consistently with his own perfections:  
his *justice*demanded satisfaction for the breach of the law;  
his *holiness*rendered it necessary that he should show his utter abhorrence of sin;  
and his *truth*was pledged for the execution of the sentence which he had annexed to the violation of his commands.

Therefore there seemed no alternative for God, nor any hope for man. But Christ, in becoming our surety, and bearing our iniquities in his own body, removed all these difficulties at once; he magnified the law by enduring its penalties, and made it honorable by fulfilling its commands. He also satisfied the demands of his Father's justice, truth, and holiness, and afforded to the whole creation a most solemn proof that *sin could never be committed with impunity*.

There was, indeed—yet one more impediment to man's recovery. Man, haying once fallen, had lost that righteousness which qualified him for the enjoyment of his God. But this also was removed in the very same way; for Christ's obedience unto death not only rendered our salvation consistent with the rights of law and justice, but also constituted a righteousness which was capable of being imputed to us; and procured for us the Holy Spirit, by whose almighty agency we are renewed after the divine image in righteousness and true holiness. Thus every obstacle to our salvation being removed by the death of Christ—his death may properly be called the ground of our justification.

**But, in the next place, the sin-atoning sacrifice of Christ has obtained for him a right to justify whom he will.** We are often said to be "bought with a price;" and it is particularly specified, that the price paid was, the blood of Christ, [1 Peter 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.19); yes, that "God purchased the Church with his own blood, [Acts 20:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.28)." Now it is obvious, that he who purchases anything, has a right to the thing purchased, as soon as ever he has paid the price. Thus then has Christ a right to us as "his purchased possession."

Moreover, Christ is represented as a surety who has discharged our debt; who may therefore demand our liberty, and deliver us out of the hands of our adversary, who threatens to cast us into prison.

Nor is this all; for, as has been observed on a foregoing part of this prophecy, God had bound himself by covenant to give him a seed; and had promised that, "if he would lay down his soul as an offering for sin, the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand." Christ therefore, having fulfilled his part of the covenant, may claim the fulfillment of the Father's engagements, and, by virtue of the authority committed to him, may reveal himself to sinners in order to their eternal salvation. Thus, whether we consider the justification of sinners as *obtained for them*, or *imparted to them*, the death of Christ must be acknowledged as the true and only ground of it.

***~~Directives.~~***

These points being so fully opened in other parts of this chapter, we may wave any further discussion of them, and propose for adoption such a line of conduct as shall ensure to every one the blessing here spoken of.

***~~1. Let us read the Scriptures with care and diligence.~~***

*The Holy Scriptures are the only fountain of divine knowledge. They are a kind of map, whereby we may find our way through this trackless desert, and arrive in safety at our Father's house.*Our Lord says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life, and they testify of me!" Let us then not merely read them, but attend particularly to the testimony which they bear to Christ. Nor let us peruse them in a cursory manner, as though they needed no study or investigation; but rather let us examine them with deep attention, as we would a will or testament by which our title to a large inheritance was to be determined. What a succession of hopes and fears would arise in our bosom, when we read in such a will, the passages that appeared prosperous or adverse; and what diligence should we use to make our title clear! How glad would we be to consult those who could give us information on the subject, and what a deep impression would their opinion make upon our minds, particularly if it were grounded on authentic records, and established cases!

Such is the way in which we should search the holy oracles for ourselves, and hear them expounded to us by others; nor should we ever rest until we can prove out of them, by indisputable evidence, our right and title to the heavenly inheritance. Happy would it be for us, if we sought the knowledge of Christ! we should soon be guided into all truth; and be made wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.

But while we thus read the Scriptures,

***~~2. Let us pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit.~~***

To unenlightened man, the Scriptures are "a sealed book;" nor, however learned he may be in other sciences, can he attain the knowledge of Christ—unless the Holy Spirit shines into his heart to give him that knowledge, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6). If we look at a sun-dial, we may understand the use and import of the figures; yet can we not attain a knowledge of the time unless the sun shines upon it. So it is with respect to the Word of God; we may understand the general meaning of the words; yet can we not receive its spiritual instructions, unless we have that "unction of the Holy One, whereby we may know all things." The words of Christ "are spirit and life;" and a spiritual discernment is necessary in order to a just apprehension of their import, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14). Paul had studied the Scriptures diligently, but could never find Christ in them, until the light shone upon him from Heaven, and the scales fell from his eyes. The Apostles had been instructed by our Lord himself between three and four years; and yet could not enter into the truths which the prophets and Christ himself had declared, until "he opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures."

Nor, with all our advantages, have we any more power to comprehend his truth; for he expressly tells us, that "no man knows either the Father or the Son, except the Holy Spirit reveals him unto us, [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27)." Hence for the attainment of divine knowledge we are directed to combine a dependence on God's Spirit with our own researches, "If you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures—then you shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord gives wisdom; out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding, [Proverbs 2:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 2.3-6)." Let us then not presume to separate what God has thus united, but pray with David, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

There is yet another direction, which it is of infinite importance to attend to, namely,

***~~3. Let us guard against self-righteousness.~~***

*There is no evil that cleaves more closely to our nature than self-righteousness.* We are always wanting to be justified by some other way than that proposed in the text. Like Naaman, if some great thing were required of us, we should gladly do it; but when it is said to us, "Wash and be clean," "Believe and be saved," we turn away in disgust. The very simplicity of this fundamental truth offends us. Were we told that we must work diligently, and become godly in order to obtain justification, we should think the direction to be safe and proper; but the Scripture account of the way of being justified is directly opposite to this. Paul says, that "to him who works not, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.5);" and this appears so strange, that men cannot, and will not, admit it. But the Apostles themselves could not *obtain justification in any other way, than by renouncing all their own righteousness, and by going as ungodly and perishing sinners unto Christ, that they might be accepted through him alone.*

This is affirmed by Paul himself, who says, "We, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified, [Galatians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.15-16)."

Let us then guard against every species and degree of self-righteousness, and look for justification solely through the knowledge of Christ, and by faith in his sin-atoning sacrifice.

***~~4. Let us, however, be careful to show forth our faith by our works.~~***

Because we say that we are not to work at all with a view to obtain justification by our works, but that we must accept justification freely as ungodly and perishing sinners—must we be understood to say that men need not to work at all, but are at liberty to continue ungodly? No! by no means. We maintain the absolute necessity both of diligence and universal godliness; we only deny to these things the office of justifying the soul. We declare to all, that they must be daily "working out their salvation with fear and trembling," and that "faith without works is dead." Let this then be borne in mind: There is, and can be, but one way of a sinner's justification before God, and that is, by the knowledge of Christ, and faith in his name; but *this free salvation, so far from giving any licence for sloth and wickedness, is the strongest incentive to holiness, and the greatest possible obligation to good works*. Let us then show forth our faith by our works. In this way we may be justified by our works, even as Abraham and Rahab were, [James 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.21); [James 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.25). compared with [Romans 4:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.2-3); [Romans 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.6). That is, we may evince the reality of our faith, and the sincerity of our hearts. Thus shall we assign to faith and works their proper offices, and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things!

***~~#976~~***

***~~THE FRUIT OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND INTERCESSION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 53:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.12)~~***

KJV. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

NIV. "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors!"

It is at this time, as it has also been in all former ages, an objection frequently urged against the true disciples of Christ, that few, if any, of the wise and noble embrace their opinions. When our blessed Lord himself ministered on earth, it was asked with scornful triumph, "Have any of the rulers and of the Pharisees believed on him?" But, if we confess, with the Apostle, that "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called"—we must resolve the difficulty into the sovereign will of God, who has "chosen the foolish and weak things of the world, to confound the wise and mighty, and the base and contemptible things of the world, to bring to nothing things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

There is, however, a period fixed in the divine counsels, when the great and mighty, as well as others, shall become obedient to the faith; and to that event the prophet directs our attention in the text. According to the present translation indeed, the Lord Jesus is represented as dividing the spoil in concert with the great; but it should rather be translated, "I will divide him the great for a portion, and he shall divide the strong for a spoil."

Agreeably to this sense of the words, we are led to view him as a victorious monarch triumphing over all the potentates on earth, and both seizing them for his spoil, and enjoying them for his portion.

In illustrating this passage, it will be proper to consider,

***~~I. The promise made to Christ.~~***

The conversion of the world to Christ is a frequent subject of prophecy; whole chapters are occupied in describing it, Isaiah 49, 60. We are told that the power of godliness shall one day pervade all ranks of people "from the least even to the greatest;" and that kings will account it their highest honor to be "the nursing-fathers of the Church, and queens her nursing-mothers." This was fulfilled in part in the Apostles' days, when many people of rank and power embraced the truth. But it was yet further accomplished in the time of *Constantine*, when the Roman empire professed subjection to the Gospel; and the religion of Christ became the established religion of the world. Since that time the chief princes of Europe have called themselves by the name of Christ, and wished to be esteemed his followers. It is true indeed that far the greater part of them have only *called*him *Lord, Lord*, while they have had no desire to do the things which he commands; still, however, their very professions of regard to his name are sufficient to show what we may expect, when God shall make bare his arm, and go forth in the chariots of the everlasting Gospel, conquering and to conquer. The time shall come when "Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; when all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him! [Psalm 72:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.8-11)."

But the terms in which this promise is expressed deserve a more minute attention. The kingdom of Christ, considered as "a portion which the Father divides unto him," is the Father's gift; but, as "a spoil which Christ divides unto himself," it is the fruit of his own conquests.

In both of these views we must regard the conversion of men to Christ. None, whether high or low, learned or unlearned, ever yield themselves up sincerely to him—but in consequence of their having been already given to him by the Father, "they make not themselves to differ; nor has one, more than another, anything, which he has not received." "As none can come unto Christ, except the Father draws them," so none will come to him, except God have both given them to Christ, and afterwards given to themselves an inclination and desire to be the Lord's.

Nor is this a mere speculative truth; it lies at the very root of all religion; we never can be duly humbled until we see ourselves destitute of all will and ability to serve the Lord; and acknowledge from our hearts, that "it is God alone who gives us either to will or to do" that which is good. Until then, we can never in sincerity refer all the glory of our salvation to God alone—we shall, of necessity, be assuming part of it to ourselves.

Our Lord expressly mentions this truth no less than seven times in his intercessory prayer in John 17, which he uttered in the presence of his disciples. What greater proof of its importance can be given? And how needful is it for us also to remember it in all our addresses at the throne of grace!

It is further noticed in the text, that *the conversion of men is also a fruit of the Redeemer's conquests*. As Canaan, though given to Abraham and his posterity, was to be gained by the sword, so we, however given by the Father to Christ, must be rescued by force out of the hands of our enemies; if Christ will possess us as "a portion," he must take us as "a spoil."

The god of this world had usurped a power over us, and, like a strong man armed, kept us under his control. It was therefore necessary that Christ, who was "stronger than he, should overcome him, and take from him the armor wherein he trusted, and divide the spoils, [Luke 11:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.22)." Accordingly he engaged with all the powers of darkness, and, "by death, destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." On his *cross*"he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." In his *ascension*"he led captivity itself captive;" and thus delivered us from the power of his great adversary.

Not that his warfare is yet accomplished, though the form of it is altered; for he has still to subdue the rebellion of our hearts. We ourselves are up in arms against him; and, when driven out of one stronghold, we flee to another, until he has cast them all down, and swept away every refuge of lies. We yield not, until his arrows are fixed deeply in our hearts; we submit not, until he has "made us willing in the day of his power!" Never, until his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory, are our "thoughts and desires brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!"

By these united means, is Christ's kingdom to be extended; nor, when once they are combined, shall all the powers of earth and Hell withstand their influence. However desperate the condition of any may appear, though they should have sold themselves to work iniquity, and become in a peculiar sense, "the lawful prey" of Satan—yet shall they be rescued, like Lot, from their victorious captors! [Genesis 14:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 14.14-16).

This very difficulty is both stated and answered by the prophet, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?" Yes, "Thus says the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children! [Isaiah 49:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-25)."

Previous to the accomplishment of this promise, Christ was to purchase the Church with his own blood, "he was to make his soul an offering for sin, and, after that, to see a seed" given to him for a portion, verse 10. Such was the tenor of the covenant which the Father entered into with his Son. But the prophet, foreseeing this work of Christ, as it were already completed, speaks of it as if finished; and states the execution of his part of the covenant, as the ground on which he might expect the accomplishment of the Father's part towards him.

In further investigating this promise, it will be proper more fully to consider,

**II. The grounds on which the fulfillment of this promise may be certainly expected.**

The Lord Jesus has fulfilled his part of the covenant entered into with the Father. His death and intercession comprehend the whole of that work, which he was to perform on earth and in Heaven for the redemption of man. And, they being virtually accomplished from the foundation of the world, our blessed Lord had a right to his purchase, and a claim upon the Father's honor for the performance of the engagements stipulated on his part.

In this view, **the death of Christ**is first mentioned in the text, "Therefore will I divide him a portion, because he has poured out his soul unto death." But it was not sufficient that Christ should die; he must die in a particular manner, and for particular ends.

Was an atonement necessary to reconcile the Father to us? Then his death must be sacrificial.

Was everlasting shame the portion we had merited? Then his death must be ignominious.

Was it necessary for the honor of God's government that sin should be punished in the sight of the whole universe? Then his death must be judicial.

Now it was in this very manner, and for these very ends, that Jesus died. The sacrifices under the law had their blood shed, and poured out at the foot of the altar; and Jesus, our sacrifice, shed his blood from every pore of his body, and "poured out his soul unto death."

To mark the ignominy that he was to endure for us, "he was numbered with transgressors" of the most atrocious character, and crucified between two thieves; as though, instead of being the Lord of glory, he was the vilest of the human race.

And, lastly, to make full satisfaction to Divine Justice, he died under a judicial sentence, bearing in his own person the load of our iniquities, and enduring the curse and condemnation due to the whole world.

Here then is one ground on which we may assuredly expect the conversion of sinners to him.

Has he fulfilled his covenant engagements in every part, and shall the Father violate his engagements to him?

Has he performed his work, and shall he not receive his wages?

Has he paid the price, and shall he not enjoy his purchased possession?

Were multitudes expressly given to him on purpose that he might redeem them; and shall they never partake of his redemption?

Was he himself exalted far above all principalities and powers, and entrusted with gifts that he might bestow them on the rebellious?

Was all fullness of blessings committed to him on purpose that he might impart them, in rich abundance, to his ransomed people, and will he not exercise his power for these ends?

We may be assured, that if there is any faithfulness in God the Father, or any power in the Lord Jesus Christ, there shall be "a gathering of sinners to our adorable Messiah." The rich and powerful, as well as the poor and weak, shall turn unto him; they shall submit to his government, and devote themselves to his glory.

The other ground on which the increase and aggrandizement of Christ's kingdom may be expected, is **the intercession of Christ**, "Therefore will I divide him a portion, because he made intercession for the transgressors." The intercession of Christ was that part of his work which he was to carry on in Heaven, after he had finished the work which was committed to him on earth. The high-priest, who typically represented Christ, was first to kill the sacrifice, then to carry the blood within the veil, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and then to burn incense before the mercy-seat. Nor, until this last ceremony was performed, was the rest of any avail; it was not until after he had covered the mercy-seat with the clouds of incense, that he had any authority to bless the people.

*Thus was our Lord, not only to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin, and to enter into Heaven with his own blood, but he was to make intercession for us at the right hand of God.*This was stipulated between the Father and him as one part of the condition, on which the conversion of sinners was to depend, "Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for your possession, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)."

Now the prophet, seeing this part of Christ's office, as it were, already fulfilled, declares its efficacy towards the salvation of men, and represents it as another ground for the performance of the Father's promise. In this view, the *intercession*of Christ is often mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. It is put altogether on a par with the *death*of Christ as the procuring cause of our salvation; it is said, "He died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification, [Romans 4:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.25)." In one place a decided preference is given to it, as being, if possible, even more influential toward the acceptance of men, than the death of Christ itself, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather who is risen again, who also makes intercession for us! [Romans 8:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.34)." His death is spoken of as effecting nothing without his intercession, "If Christ is not risen, we are yet in our sins; and they, who are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished, 1 Corinthians 15:17-18." Nor is this all; his sufficiency for the needs and necessities of his people is represented as turning upon this hinge, and as standing altogether upon this ground, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them! [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25)."

Let his intercession then be considered in this view. Did the *Father*hear him always when he was on earth, and will he not hear him now that he is in Heaven? Did *Moses*, a sinner like ourselves, arrest, as it were, the arm of Omnipotence, and avert God's vengeance from the idolatrous Jews, Exodus 32—and shall not the prayers of Jesus prevail for us? Did the efficacy of his intercession appear on the day of Pentecost in the conversion of thousands, and shall it not be further manifested in the salvation of all whose cause he pleads! Surely, if we have but faith to believe, we may already see "the glory of the Lord risen upon the Church, and the Gentiles coming to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising."

**Let us then learn from this subject two things**:

***~~1. The importance of Christ's mediation.~~***

On this everything depends; without this, there would never have been a gleam of hope for any, whether rich or poor. Satan would have retained his power over us, and would have been to all of us, as it were, the *jailer*, to carry us to prison, and the *executioner*to inflict upon us the judgments we deserve.

Because Christ poured out his soul unto death, our souls shall live forever.

Because he was numbered with transgressors, we shall be numbered with the saints.

Because he bore our sins, we shall never have one sin laid to our charge.

Because he lives to make intercession for us, we shall receive all the blessings of grace and glory!

Let us then make his work our trust, our confidence, and our plea.

Let us urge it with the Father on our behalf, that we may be given to Christ as his portion, and enjoyed by him as his spoil.

Nor let us be discouraged by the thought that we are transgressors, as though the greatness of our transgressions were any bar to our acceptance; for it is for transgressors that he intercedes; and, if we feel ourselves to be of that number (provided we hate and turn from our transgressions) we may be well assured that our iniquity shall not be our ruin. "Be wise therefore, O kings, be instructed, you judges of the earth; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way! [Psalm 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.12)."

This subject may yet further show us,

**2. The security of those who are savingly interested in Christ's mediation.**

The believer's security does not depend on the perfection of his own works, or the fidelity of his own promises, (for who does not see continual reason to lament his own imperfections and unfaithfulness?) but rather on the perfection of Christ's work, and the faithfulness of God. And who can find a flaw in either of these? What is there that Christ has not done for the complete redemption of our souls? Or who ever trusted in God and was confounded? Let us not fear then though earth and Hell conspire against us. Let us rather adopt the triumphant language of the Apostle, "Who shall lay anything to our charge? It is God that justifies. Who shall condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather that is risen again, who also makes intercession for us!" We may rest satisfied that he is faithful, who has promised; and that, as the heroes of old hung up their trophies in the temples of their gods, so Christ will take us to Heaven as the fruit of his victories, the everlasting monuments of his power and grace.

Let us then "hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." Let us "believe in the Lord; so shall we prosper. Let us believe his prophets; and so shall we be established."

***~~#977~~***

***~~OUR MAKER OUR HUSBAND~~***

***~~[Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5)~~***

"Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord Almighty is his name!"

***~~In circumstances whether of personal or public difficulty, it is well to bear in remembrance that there is one who orders all things according to his own sovereign will, and who will never fail those who trust in Him.~~***

Doubtless the Jewish Church, at the time that the Prophet Isaiah wrote, and especially in the prospect of the Babylonish captivity which he predicted, was at a low ebb; but the prophet calls upon her to take comfort, in the sure and certain hope that God would fulfill to her all his promises, and enlarge her borders by the accession of unnumbered converts from among the Gentiles, who, in due season, would be received into her bosom, and aggrandize her in the eyes of the whole world. She might be assured of this; because, notwithstanding the bill of divorce which God had given her, he still considered himself as her husband; and because He, who was her God, was also "the God of the whole earth."

In this promise we are savingly interested, both as it respects ourselves and the world at large. I will therefore endeavor to unfold it to your view; and, for that end, will consider,

**I. The general idea here suggested.**

There is a peculiarity in the original which does not appear in the translation, which yet it is of great importance to observe. In the original it is, "Your Makers are your husband." It must be remembered, that, at the first creation of man, it was said, "Let us make man in our image, after *our*likeness, [Genesis 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 1.26)." In that passage it seems as if the formation of man was a matter in which the Three Persons of the Godhead concurred; and the same idea is evidently suggested in the passage before us. The same peculiarity occurs also in the Book of Ecclesiastes; where it is said, "Remember your Creators in the days of your youth, z." Now, though these expressions mark a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, I would not think them of themselves sufficient to establish the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity; but when I find that doctrine so fully declared in other portions of Holy Writ, I cannot but regard these as very strongly confirming it. I feel that I can then account for, and explain, these peculiarities; which, without such a solution, must be utterly inexplicable.

But, not to dwell on the mere words, I will call your attention to the great subject contained in them; which indeed deserves the more attention, because there is not anyone image in which our relation to God is more frequently or more strongly marked, than in that of *marriage*.

***~~Look at it as stated in general terms.~~***

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament alike abound with this figure. God declares, that he was the Husband of his Church in the wilderness, [Jeremiah 31:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.32). And, after he had put her away for her adulteries, he recalls her to him, saying, "Return unto me; for I am *married*unto you, [Jeremiah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.14)." When our God incarnate came, even our Lord Jesus Christ, his forerunner, John the Baptist, pointed him out as the *Bridegroom*of his Church [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29); and our Lord himself also assumed it as a title which he bore, and a character he sustained, "Can the children of the bride chamber fast while the *bridegroom*is with them? But the days will come, when the *bridegroom*shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast in those days, [Matthew 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.15)."

Paul enters into the subject at large, drawing a parallel between the duties of the marriage relation, as existing among men, and those which we owe to Christ as the Husband of the Church; and lest we should confine our attention exclusively to the former, which appeared to be primarily, if not solely, in his contemplation, he particularly adds, "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and his Church! [Ephesians 5:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.32)."

But to dwell on particular passages is needless; because a defection from God is, throughout the whole Scripture, called "adultery;" it being an alienation of heart from Him, whose right to it, as the Husband of his Church, is unalienable and universal.

***~~But look at it as more minutely and distinctly marked.~~***

Not to enter too minutely into a subject of such delicacy, we may notice his first choice of us, in order to the forming of this connection with us. *Truly, God's choice of us was altogether the result of his sovereign will and pleasure, without the slightest measure of respect to any goodness or worthiness in us,*[Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.7-8). Having made us the objects of his choice, he "betrothed us to himself, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; yes, he even betrothed us to himself in faithfulness, [Hosea 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.19-20)," engaging, that "he would be for us only and exclusively, as we also would be exclusively for him, [Hosea 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.3)." We have a further account of the very nuptials, and the feast attending them, [Matthew 22:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.2); [Matthew 25:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.10), and the consequent union consummated and confirmed, [Song of Solomon 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 2.4). Further, the end of this union is declared, "We are married to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God, [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4)."

All this is spoken of as commenced on earth; but it is yet further represented as completed in Heaven, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the *marriage*of the Lamb has come!" "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb! [Revelation 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.7); [Revelation 19:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.9)." "Come here, and I will show you the *Bride*, the Lamb's Wife! [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9)."

I conceive that this is sufficient to show how largely this subject is treated of in the Holy Scriptures; and, consequently, how much we are concerned to investigate,

***~~II. The important particulars contained in it.~~***

Of course we shall confine ourselves to those great and leading particulars which will best mark the dignity and importance of the subject. The relation, then, of Jehovah as a Husband to his Church, may be considered as comprehending,

***~~1. His union with us.~~***

By the constitution of marriage, as formed by God himself in Paradise, the husband and wife were declared to "be one flesh, [Genesis 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.24)." So, by virtue of this relation, as subsisting between Christ and his Church, we are not only one flesh with him, (for "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30),") but we are one spirit with him; as it is written, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit, [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)."

Now this is a union far closer than any other that can exist on earth. Indeed it most resembles that which exists in Heaven between the different persons of the Godhead; as our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "I pray for them, that they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us" …. "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one, [John 17:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.21-22)." There is between him and them a mutual indwelling, such as no language can describe, and no finite imagination can conceive! [John 6:56](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.56).

***~~2. His interest in us.~~***

People united in the marriage-bond have a mutual property in each other, and a mutual interest in everything belonging to them. And thus it is between Christ and his believing people. The believer is Christ's, [1 Corinthians 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.23); and everything which he possesses is Christ's. "In no respect whatever is he his own, [1 Corinthians 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.19);" from the moment of his union with Christ by faith, he was altogether "in spirit, soul, and body, sanctified unto the Lord, [1 Thessalonians 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.23)." The Lord Jesus Christ, also, has given himself over to the believing soul. The very weakest believer is authorized to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his! Song of Solomon 2:16." Yes, truly, so it is; for "God is not ashamed to be called our God, [Hebrews 11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.16)."

In truth, all that the Lord Jesus Christ is, and all that he has, becomes the property of the believing soul, and is all employed for his benefit. The wisdom, the power, the grace of the Lord Jesus are exerted in regulating the whole universe for the good of his people, [Ephesians 2:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.22). Yes, "the very glory which his Father gave to him, he gives to them [John 17:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.22);" his throne is their throne, his crown is their crown, his kingdom is their kingdom, [Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21); they are in everything "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ [Romans 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.17)."

***~~3. His feelings towards us.~~***

Not only will love be exercised by a husband in a way of fond endearment, but it will show itself in all its diversified operations, according as circumstances shall arise to call it forth. Thus will the Lord Jesus Christ evince his love to us in every possible way. Not only will he "*delight*in us," und "*rejoice*over us to do us good, [Jeremiah 32:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.41);" but he will *sympathize*with us in all our troubles, [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15), being himself afflicted in all our afflictions, [Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9)," no less than participating in all our joys, [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17).

Certainly I feel, that, in speaking these things, there may appear to be a danger of exceeding the bounds of sobriety and truth; but God himself has taken the very image, and drawn the very parallel; and that so strongly, that we are in danger rather of falling short by reason of our ignorance and unbelief—than of exceeding through an over-heated imagination.

"No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take *delight*in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God *rejoice*over you! [Isaiah 62:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.4-5)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who, through grace, have been brought into this relation to God.~~***

What terms can ever express the commendations that are due to you? Would it be deemed a just ground of commendation, if you were united in the nuptial bond to an earthly monarch? How then must I felicitate you on having for "your Husband, your Maker," "the Lord Almighty," "the God of the whole earth! verse 5." O! what honor has been conferred on you! What blessings await you, both in time and in eternity!

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. "'Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. "'Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine! [Ezekiel 16:3-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.3-8)."

Think, too, how often you have given him occasion to put you away for your unfaithfulness towards him, and by a bill of divorce to dismiss you forever from his presence. But he is "a God of all grace," and, for his own great name's sake, has borne with you even to the present hour! [Ezekiel 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.9); [Ezekiel 20:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.14); [Ezekiel 20:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 20.22).

Now, therefore, prepare to fulfill your duties towards him, and to walk before him in newness of heart and life. While you reflect on your privileges, be mindful also of your duties. And be careful never more to "grieve his Holy Spirit," or to "provoke him to jealousy," by even the appearance of evil. Remember what even a creature expects from her to whom he is joined in these sacred bonds; and let your every action, every word, and every thought, be such as shall approve itself to him "who searches the heart, and tries the thoughts." In a word: *Be altogether his, even as you desire that he should be wholly and altogether yours!*

***~~2. Those who know him not yet under this endearing character.~~***

O that I could prevail on every one of you to accept his gracious offers this day! Did Abraham send his servant to seek a wife for his son Isaac? Methinks I bear a similar commission from the God of Heaven unto you. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ! [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2)."

This is the object of my address to you this day. O that you knew who it is that often himself to you by my voice; and that you considered how worthy He is of your affections! What is there that anyone of you would desire in a husband?

Do you admire wisdom? The Lord Jesus Christ is "the wisdom of God himself, [1 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.24)."

Would you wish for beauty? "He is fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely, [Song of Solomon 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 5.10), Song of Solomon 5:16."

Have riches or honors any attractions in your eyes? "His riches are unsearchable, [Ephesians 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.8);" and "all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, [Colossians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.9)."

What is there in the whole creation that can vie with him? What is there that is in any degree worthy to be compared with him? Behold, it is "*He*who now stands at the door of your hearts, and knocks, [Revelation 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.20)," and seeks admission into them. Know then the day of your visitation. "Refuse not Him who now speaks to you" by my voice, [Hebrews 12:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.25), and says, "Give me your heart! [Proverbs 23:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 23.26)."

This only he requires, that you should renounce all others, and "cleave unto him with full purpose of heart." These are his very words, by which he now addresses you, "Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord, [Psalm 45:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.10-11)."

Accept his offers, beloved friends, and give yourselves unreservedly to him; so shall the very angels in Heaven clap their wings with joy, [Luke 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.7); [Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.10), and all the glory of Heaven be made over to you as your everlasting inheritance!

***~~#978~~***

***~~GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS COVENANT ENGAGEMENTS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 54:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.6-10)~~***

KJV. "The Lord has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go ever the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you."

NIV. "The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you!"

The Covenant of Grace, as securing to the believer all the blessings of time and eternity, is not considered as much as the importance of it demands. There is in the minds of the generality of people, a hatred respecting it, so that they can scarcely bear to hear the subject stated as it is in the Holy Scriptures. But we must not conceal anything; and least of all should we keep back from you that which is the fountain and foundation of all the other blessings which you either have or hope for. Certain it is that there is a covenant, called in my text, "The covenant of God's peace;" the provisions of which are here set before us with singular force and clearness.

The whole passage may be considered:

***~~I. In reference to the Jewish Church.~~***

To them it primarily refers. The Jewish Church is here represented as a repudiated wife, put away for her unfaithfulness to her Maker, who calls himself "her husband, verse 5." Great and manifold were her offences against him; and most justly did she merit the displeasure with which on different occasions she was visited. In the days of the Judges she was often delivered up to her enemies, who oppressed her with the heaviest yoke of bondage; at last she was sent into captivity in Babylon; and at this hour is Jerusalem a desolation, having for eighteen centuries been trodden down by the Gentiles, and left without a temple, or priest, or sacrifice, or any ordinance whatever.

Yet she is not *finally*cast off. Her Divine Husband yet remembers his covenant-engagements, though she has forgotten hers; and his oath will he fulfill, though she has violated hers in ten thousand instances. His *wrath*against her, though so richly merited, is "small and transient;" while the *mercies*which he has prepared for her are "great" and "everlasting." "He has yet thoughts of love and peace towards her;" and will in due season restore her to her former privileges; yes, and load her with benefits far beyond any which she ever before enjoyed! The very "sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded," in the day that he shall visit her with his mercies; so utterly will all creature enjoyments be swallowed up and annihilated by the manifestations of his love! [Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23); [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26). See the glories of that period described in verse 11, 12. compared with [Isaiah 60:13-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.13-22).

Of this he graciously assures her, by a two-fold representation:  
first, in a way of comparison,  
and then in a way of contrast.

At the time of the deluge, God promised with an oath to Noah, that he would no more deluge the earth; and appointed the rainbow itself (which, as being a reflection of the rays of the sun from the drops of rain, marked the actual descent of rain at the time) to be a pledge that he would fulfill his Word. In like manner, says God, "I have sworn to you, that I will not be angry with you, nor rebuke you" to your utter ruin; and you may regard the very afflictions with which I visit you, as a pledge of your future restoration; for "I will not make a full end of you; though I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished, [Jeremiah 30:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.11)."

Again, of all things which may be deemed stable upon earth, the hills and the mountains may be regarded as the most firm and immovable; but, says God, the hills and mountains have been, and shall be, removed—but it shall not be so with you; for "the covenant of my peace shall never be removed."

The manner in which God speaks of himself, while announcing this determination, is yet further worthy to be noticed; for he does not call himself by any name that would inspire fear and terror, but by names importing the most tender love; not "The Lord" your Creator, your Governor, your Judge. But, "The Lord your Redeemer," "the Lord that has mercy on you."

Now it is this view of the covenant which encourages us in all our efforts for the conversion of the Jews; for we know infallibly, that they are not cast off forever; that they are still beloved of God for their fathers' sakes; and that in due time they shall be engrafted in again upon their own olive-tree, and experience in a temporal and spiritual view, such prosperity as they never yet enjoyed even under Solomon himself. Our trust is, not in any efforts of man, but in the power and fidelity of God. And though in their present condition they are as dry bones, very dry, reduced to dust, and scattered over the face of the earth—yet we are sure, that, by the simple preaching of the Gospel to them, they shall arise, a whole army! [Ezekiel 37:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.1-2); [Ezekiel 37:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.10). Yes, "the zeal of the Lord Almighty will do this;" as we are assured by many similar declarations of the prophet Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 31:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.35-37); [Jeremiah 33:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.23-26).

But the passage must also be explained,

***~~II. In reference to the Christian Church.~~***

We do not approve of limiting to the Church of Christ, a multitude of prophecies which belong primarily to the Jewish Church. On the other hand, we must not rob the Christian Church of that interest which she has in them. It is observable, that the very first verse of this chapter is cited by Paul as applicable to the Christian Church, [Galatians 4:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.26-27); and at the close of the chapter all the rich promises contained in it are said to belong to her, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord (whoever they may be); and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord,, verse 17." Now,

***~~The Christian Church stands in the relation of a Spouse to Christ.~~***

So it is represented through the whole Book of Canticles. So it is declared by the Psalmist, [Psalm 45:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.10-11). The same is affirmed by our Lord himself, [Matthew 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.15), and by all his Apostles, [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29). [Ephesians 5:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.32). [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9).

***~~But too often does she provoke the Lord to hide his face from her.~~***

How often have the Church at large, and every member of it in particular, alienated their hearts from God, and adulterously placed on the creature, those affections which were due to him alone! Too true is that accusation which he brings against us, that "we have played the harlot with many lovers! [Jeremiah 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.1)."

What then might we not expect, if God should deal with us according to our iniquities? What, but that he should cast us off, and swear in his wrath that we should never more be received into his favor?

***~~Yet still does "God remember his covenant" towards her.~~***

"He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever." He will not break his covenant, though we have broken ours; nor will he violate his oath, though we have violated ours times without number. "He will visit our transgressions with the rod, and our iniquity with stripes;" (and, if the chastening us with whips will not suffice, he will "chastise us with scorpions, even seven-fold more, for our sins, [1 Kings 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 12.11). [Leviticus 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 26.18).), "nevertheless he not utterly take from us his loving-kindness will, nor allow his faithfulness to fail; he will not break covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips; for once he has sworn by his holiness that he will not lie unto David, [Psalm 89:33-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.33-35)." He knew what we were, and what we would be also, if left to ourselves, before he chose us; yet did he bid us live, and spread his skirt over us, and entered into covenant with us, [Ezekiel 16:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.6); [Ezekiel 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.8). [Isaiah 48:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.8). It was on this very account that he in his covenant undertook to do for us all that related either to the pardoning of our guilt, or to the sanctifying of our nature, [Jeremiah 31:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.11-12); and engaged, not only never to depart from us, but never to leave us to depart from him! [Jeremiah 32:39-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.39-41). Of all this he has assured us by promise and by oath, on purpose that by "these two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest consolation, if we have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18)."

If our continuance in his favor had depended altogether on our stability—then who would ever be saved at last? (It is of the *grounds* of our security that we are now speaking, and not of the *means*of our security; of them we shall speak in another place.) Our final stability must be the work of his grace, as much as our first inclination to serve him; all our good works from first to last must be wrought in us by him, [Isaiah 26:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.12). When he chose us, he chose us to the end, and to the means; or rather to the end by the means [2 Thessalonians 2:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.13-14); and "his gifts and calling are without repentance [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.29)."

*Our security then rests upon the unchangeableness of our God*, [Malachi 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.6), "whose compassions fail not, [Lamentations 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 3.22)," and "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, [James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.17)." I again repeat, that he may hide himself from us, and for a long period also, as it may appear to us; for it is both his right and his property to do so, [Isaiah 45:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.15). But "his anger" will endure but for "a little moment;" and though our "weeping may endure for a night, joy shall come to us in the morning! [Psalm 30:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 30.5)."

***~~In a review of this subject,~~***

***~~1. Let none, however desolate their condition may be, indulge in despair.~~***

This is the true use to be made of this important subject. Do not let Jews despair of being restored to the favor of their God; but let them plead with God, as their forefathers did, [Isaiah 63:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.15-16); and accept the invitation which God himself has given them to return unto him, [Jeremiah 3:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.12-14).

Nor let true Christians who are under the hidings of God's face despond. Do not let any of you ask, like David,

"Will the Lord cast off forever?  
Will he be favorable no more?  
Is his mercy clean gone forever?  
Does his promise fail for evermore?  
Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?

This were only to betray your own infirmity, [Psalm 77:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-10)," and to show your utter ignorance of God, [Isaiah 40:28-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.28-31); [Isaiah 49:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.14-16).

You will say then, What shall we do? I answer: Lay hold on God's covenant, and look to him to fulfill every part of it. Approach your God with penitential sorrow, as the Church of old did, "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against you. Yet do not abhor us, for your name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us! [Jeremiah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 14.20-21)." See how David pleaded under similar circumstances, [Psalm 27:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 27.9); and resolve, as the Prophet Isaiah teaches you, "I will wait upon the Lord that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him, [Isaiah 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.17)."

***~~2. Let none, however confident of their state before God, be guilty of presumption.~~***

*Of the book of God's decrees we know nothing, but as it is made visible by facts. Respecting any man's election to eternal life, we can judge only by his works.* Hence it is certain that "whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil" and "whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God!" [1 John 3:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.7-10)." Therefore, if we are living in the willful commission of any one sin, or habitual neglect of any one duty—then we have no ground whatever to imagine that we are of the number of God's elect. To imagine therefore that a work of grace has been begun in us, while our daily experience proves that we are the willing slaves of sin and Satan—is only to deceive our own souls, and to surrender up ourselves as an easy prey into the hands of the devil, our great adversary!

Our wisdom is, to seek a union with the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; and not to be dreaming of privileges which we do not possess; for, as *it is certain, on the one hand, that no man can be saved who willfully lives in any allowed sin*—so it is equally certain, on the other hand, that no one can ever perish who flees to Christ for refuge, and relies altogether upon him for "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

This then must be our daily work; and so far is the covenant of grace from superseding this duty, that it affords us our greatest encouragement to perform it; because it assures us, that we shall "never seek God's face in vain," and that "those who trust in him shall never be confounded."

While therefore I would say to the trembling believer: Look to "the covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure, [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)," and expect God to fulfill all the promises of it to your souls!

To the unbeliever I would say: Look to the Lord Jesus Christ, to wash you from your guilt, and to renew you by his Spirit. Respecting the provisions of the covenant, do not trouble yourselves, until you have an *evidence*in your own souls that you desire deliverance from sin as much as freedom from condemnation; and get your souls well instructed in a thorough experience of the first principles of repentance and faith, before you presume to build your hopes either on the secret decrees of Heaven, or on any fallacious arguments deduced from them.

***~~#979~~***

***~~PEACE THE FRUIT OF DIVINE TEACHING~~***

***~~[Isaiah 54:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.13)~~***

"All your children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of your children."

The Jewish Church was often in a state of great distress, under the judgments of Almighty God. In Babylon especially was she at the lowest ebb of degradation and misery. But there was consolation provided for her in a prospect of glorious times, when her light, and peace, and joy, and purity—would far exceed anything which she had ever experienced in her most prosperous state; and the whole Gentile world also would be made partakers of her blessedness.

In the words before the text, the Jewish Church is represented as a tent or tabernacle torn and "tossed by the winds," and reduced to a most desolate condition; and a promise is given to her, that God will build her as a palace, every part of which shall be composed of precious stones; her foundations being of sapphires, her windows of agates, her gates of sparkling jewels, and even her borders, or outward walls, of pleasant stones, verse 11, 12."

In her former state, her whole service consisting of rites and ordinances; she was forced to receive her instructions from men whose peculiar duty was to ascertain and execute the will of God in every one of his appointments; and in the performance of these burdensome rites there was but little satisfaction to the soul. But in the state to which she was encouraged to look forward, a different system was to prevail; the instruction that was to be conveyed was spiritual; and a compliance with it was to be attended with much delight. Hence it was said to her, "All your children shall be taught of God; and great shall be the peace of your children."

The promises here made to the Church relate to the two things which were chiefly lacking under that shadowy dispensation; namely,

***~~I. Divine Illumination.~~***

**This is a blessing which every human being needs.**

We may obtain from men and books a speculative knowledge of religion, as well as of any other science; but a spiritual discernment can be given us by God alone. This is declared by an inspired Apostle, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, [1 Corinthians 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.14)." In like manner our blessed Lord testifies, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him, [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27)."

How far this is true or false, it is in the power of every man to ascertain, by his own experience. Let it be tried. Of the leading truths of the Gospel we may suppose the generality of people to be convinced. They know:  
that they are sinners;  
that they need a Savior;  
that a Savior has been provided for them;  
that a promise of salvation is given to all who will believe in him;  
and that on those who reject his overtures of mercy, the guilt of all their sins must rest forever.

Now then let any man sit down to consider these truths; let him call in the aid of all the most competent instructors he can find; and let him see whether he can, by any efforts of his own, bring himself to a spiritual perception of those truths—that is, to *such a view of them as shall produce a suitable impression on his mind, and a corresponding effect upon his heart and life*. Let him labor as long as he shall see fit; and, after the fullest possible trial, let him declare, whether he has been able to produce in his soul the feelings which were excited in the bosoms of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; and in his whole spirit and character the same permanent change.

If one single person in the universe be found that can effect this, then we are content to acknowledge that our assertions on this subject are erroneous, and that man does not need the teachings of God's Spirit in order to a spiritual perception of divine truth. But it no such instance ever was, or can be, found, then may we be assured, that "flesh and blood cannot reveal these things" to our souls, and that we can know them only by the teaching of God himself, [Matthew 16:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.17).

***~~This however is promised to us in the Gospel.~~***

The Spirit of God has undertaken to impart it to our souls. His particular office in the economy of Redemption is, "to testify of Christ, [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26)," and "to glorify Christ by taking of the things that are his, and showing them unto us, [John 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14)." And in the execution of this office he "convinces the soul of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, [John 16:7-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.7-11);" and so convinces of these things as to produce in the soul all the diversified sensations which they are suited to create.

If it is asked, What evidence does anyone give, whereby it may be ascertained, whether this promised influence is a reality or a delusion? I answer, This also may be brought to a visible test, by which the whole world may judge of it. *The man who truly experiences this teaching, immediately comes to Christ as a sinner, and with deep humiliation and contrition seeks salvation through him alone.*This our blessed Lord himself affirms; and affirms it too with an express reference to the words of our text, "It is written in the Prophets," says he, "They shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard and learned of the Father, comes unto me, [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.45)." There is no exception under Heaven; the effect of this teaching is invariable and universal. Nay more, it produces a holy energy and determination of mind to come to Christ at all events, and to disregard all the consequences that such a step can possibly involve. This may be seen in the conduct of the Apostle Paul, who says, "When it pleased God, who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, [Galatians 1:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.15-17)," but proceeded to adopt such measures as I judged most calculated to advance his glory.

This divine teaching therefore, though invisible in itself, even as the wind, is yet, like the wind, *visible in its effects*; and "all the children of Zion" are privileged to experience it in their souls. The weakest person in the whole creation shall enjoy it, if he will but seek it in faith and prayer. Yes, "what God has hidden from the wise and prudent, he will reveal unto babes; even so, because it seems good in his sight! [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)."

Connected with this blessing is,

***~~II. Heavenly peace.~~***

Men, without any Divine teaching, possess what they call peace; but it is a state which does not deserve the name of peace, seeing that it is nothing but a stupid insensibility, issuing from a forgetfulness of all their spiritual concerns. Speak to them of death, and judgment, Heaven and Hell—and their peace vanishes in a moment; and they are ready to desire, like Satan, that they "may not be tormented before their time, [Matthew 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.29)." But the peace which Christ bestows, and which he emphatically calls his, [John 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.27), is of a very different kind; it is a positive sense of acceptance with God, and a rest of the soul in God. This the believer experiences,

***~~1. In the view of all his past sins.~~***

***~~So far is he from being appalled by a sight of his sins, that he desires to have them set before him in all their malignity, and with all their numberless aggravations. He feels that a sense of his disease is necessary to an enjoyment of the remedy; and the more he sees his own guilt and helplessness, the more he glories in Christ as a suitable and all-sufficient Savior.~~***

The very impossibility of being saved in any other way than through the death and righteousness of Christ, constrains him to look altogether to Christ, as "the very chief of sinners," who shall to all eternity be held forth as a specimen of what the grace of God could effect! [1 Timothy 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.16). The thought that the extent and riches of redeeming love will be pre-eminently displayed in him, perfectly reconciles him to the idea of having all his sins exposed before the assembled universe; since the Savior will be most glorified in those whom he has redeemed from the deepest death.

Let me not however be mistaken. The believer is not indifferent to his past sins; (for he mourns over them to his dying hour,) much less does he think it a desirable thing for a person to commit great sins in order that Christ may be magnified in the forgiveness of them; (for that would be to make Christ himself "a minister of sin, [Galatians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.17);" but seeing that his sins have been great, he derives consolation from the thought, that "where sin has abounded, the grace of Christ shall much more abound; and that, as sin has reigned unto death, even so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord! [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21)."

***~~2. In the view of all his present infirmities.~~***

These would quite overwhelm his spirits, if his eyes were not opened to see on what "a Mighty One help had been laid for him, [Psalm 89:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.19)." He could not hope to maintain his peace one hour, but that he knows he has an Advocate with the Father, ever ready to intercede for him; and that that very "Advocate is also the atoning sacrifice for all his sins, [1 John 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.2)." In Christ too he beholds a fullness of grace treasured up for him; of grace ever ready, and all-sufficient for him, in his greatest necessities. Hence, so far from being discouraged by a sense of his weakness, he even derives consolation and encouragement from it; just as Paul did, who says, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong! 2 Corinthians 12:10." The thought that "the strength of Christ will be made perfect," and manifested to be perfect, "in his weakness," turns the sense which he has of his weakness into a ground of joy, and makes him even to "glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)."

***~~3. In the view of the final judgment.~~***

The bar of judgment is no longer an object of dread and terror to his soul. "He knows in whom he has believed; and is persuaded that Jesus is able to keep that which he has committed to him, 2 Timothy 1:12." He has no fear that God will forget his promises, or that the Savior who bought him with his blood, and furnished him with continual supplies of grace, will give him up to that destroyer, from whose power he has rescued him at so great a price. He looks on the judgment day as the time appointed for his complete deliverance. He knows that then the body, which has here been such a clog to his soul, shall be made a partaker with the soul in all the glory and felicity of Heaven. He looks forward therefore to it with joy. It is as much the object of hope to him, as the first coming of the Savior was to the Jewish Church.

How delightful is it to him to contemplate the wonders of that day: to behold the Savior coming in all the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels with him; to behold him seated on his judgment-seat, and, ordering to either hand the sheep and the goats; to hear him pronounce the sentence upon each*.*And then:  
to ascend with him in sweet anticipation to the realms of bliss;  
to be seated on his throne;  
to behold his glory in all its brightness;  
to hear his voice;  
to taste his love;  
to participate in his glory;  
and to spend eternity in songs of praise!

All this is delightful to the believer's soul; and in the anticipation of it he already possesses a foretaste of the heavenly bliss!

With these views "his peace is great;" yes truly, he has "a peace that passes all understanding, [Philippians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.6);" and "rivers of it flow into his soul, [Isaiah 48:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.17-18)," being "filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit, [Romans 15:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.13)."

***~~See then, brethren:~~***

***~~1. What blessings are treasured up for you in the Gospel.~~***

It is to "Zion's Children" that these blessings are limited; and how are you to be brought into that relation to her, but by the Gospel? Know that, if you submit yourselves truly to the voice of God in his Word—then all these blessings are yours! You shall have that "annointing of the Holy One that shall teach you all things, [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.27);" and you shall possess the consolations of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small, [Job 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 15.11). [Jeremiah 30:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.19).

But remember, that "God will be inquired of," before he will impart them to you, [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.37); it is by the holy violence of prayer that they must be brought down from Heaven; and by the appropriating energy of faith that they must be made available for your salvation.

***~~2. How injurious are the workings of unbelief.~~***

Unbelief puts the promises of God far from us, under an idea that we have no title to them; and deprives the soul of all the happiness which it is privileged to enjoy. In vain does God say, "All" your children shall be taught of God; for unbelief has found out some reason for an exception in this or that particular person. In vain has God said, "Great shall be the peace" of your children; for unbelief suggests that trouble and fear are more suited to the case of this particular individual. I do not mean to say, that willful and habitual sin is not a bar both to the teachings and consolations of the Spirit; for that will assuredly cut off all gracious communications from us; as it is said, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, [Isaiah 59:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.2)."

But, if we truly turn to God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, no past iniquities are any bar to our acceptance with him; nor are any present infirmities a ground for desponding fears; seeing that there is a sufficiency in Christ for all our needs; and our very necessities afford him a more glorious occasion for magnifying himself in our support. Dismiss then all doubts and fears respecting your right to apprehend the promises of God, or your title to expect his promised blessings. Only "be strong in faith, giving glory to God, [Romans 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 4.20);" and "according to your faith it shall be done unto you, [Matthew 9:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.29)."

***~~#980~~***

***~~THE SAINT'S HERITAGE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 54:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.17)~~***

KJV. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord."

NIV. "No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD."

The Scriptures uniformly suppose men to be, not only in a state of *sin*, but, to a certain degree, in a state of *misery*also, being more or less agitated with "fightings without, and fears within." The very people of God themselves are not exempt from this common lot. *The difference between them and others consists not in a freedom from trouble, but in consolations and supports which they alone enjoy*. They have a God to go to; a God who tenderly sympathizes with them in all their troubles, and "in all their afflictions is himself afflicted, [Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9)." From Him they receive the most consolatory promises, and generally in language that precludes a possibility of their doubting to whom those promises are made.

Are they under the actual pressure of the deepest sorrow? He addresses them as in that very state, and characterizes them by the very tribulations which they endure. "O afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not comforted," behold, I will interest myself in all your concerns; and "no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

These words will lead me to set before you:

**I. The heritage of God's servants.**

Three things are here specified as their unalienable portion;

***~~1. Protection from danger.~~***

From the very beginning, they have been objects of hatred both to men and devils, who have combined their efforts for their destruction. From the days of Cain, the followers of Abel's piety have been persecuted by their envious and malignant brethren; while "Satan, as a roaring lion, has gone about, seeking to devour them!"

But we need not fear the assaults of either; for God has engaged, in reference to his Church at large, that "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18);" and, in reference to every individual believer, that "none shall pluck them out of his hand, [John 10:28-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-30)." "It is not his will that one of his little ones should perish! [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14). [Luke 12:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.32)."

***~~2. Vindication from calumny.~~***

What efforts have been made to destroy the character of God's people, may be seen in the account given of them by Haman to Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them." [Esther 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Esther 3.8-9)."

They still, as formerly, are a sect that is everywhere spoken against; nor is there "any manner of evil which will not be laid falsely to their charge, [Matthew 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.11)," But God does often, in a wonderful way, interpose for them, to the vindicating of their character, and the confusion of all their enemies, [1 Samuel 24:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 24.17). Indeed, the very people who most bitterly traduce them, often venerate them in their hearts; even as "Herod feared John, from an inward conviction that he was a just and holy man, [Mark 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 6.20)."

But, however God may allow his people to be treated "as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things, [1 Corinthians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.13)," even to their dying hour, there is a time coming when he will appear in their behalf; and, if man has his day, God will have his day also [1 Corinthians 4:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.3-5); and will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day, [Psalm 37:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 37.5-6). [Isaiah 66:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.5)."

***~~3. Justification from all sin.~~***

In two ways will God justify his people; the one is, by an authoritative attestation from the mouth of their Judge; the other, by putting upon them that very righteousness whereby they shall be justified. The Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, has wrought out "a righteousness which shall be unto all and upon all those who believe, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22);" and when they are arrayed in this, "God sees no iniquity in them, [Numbers 23:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 23.21)," because he has "blotted it out from the book of his remembrance," and "cast it all behind him, into the very depths of the sea! [Micah 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.19) and [Isaiah 38:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 38.17)." "If it is sought forever so diligently, it cannot be found! [Jeremiah 50:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 50.20);" for they are before God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, yes, holy, and without blemish! [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27)." "This is the blessed heritage of all God's servants;" and all of them in due time shall possess it.

That we may the better estimate their felicity, let us notice:

***~~II. Their security for the possession of it.~~***

It is altogether "of God," as our text declares; and all the attributes of God are pledged for their ultimate possession of it. It is secured to them by:

***~~1. The power of God.~~***

Respecting this, there is particular mention made in the preceding context. God warns his people that they must expect persecution from an ungodly world. "Behold! they shall surely gather together, but not by me; whoever shall gather together against you, shall fall for your sake." But how shall the conspiracy of God's enemies be defeated! How? God himself tells us, "I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth his instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." Has He then created both the man who made the weapon, and the man who uses it; and can he not control both the one and the other, so that the weapon shall effect only what he sees fit to permit? Let the servants of God, then, consider this: Their enemies are all in the hands of God, even of their God; and "they can have no power whatever, except that which is given them from above." What need then have the saints to fear? Who can get access to those whom God "hides in the secret place of his tabernacle?" or, "Who can, with any effect, be against them, when He is for them?" "His name is a strong tower; and the righteous, who have run to it, are safe."

***~~2. The goodness and veracity of God.~~***

They have given themselves to him, as "his servants;" and will he forget them? Will he who "makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust," refuse protection to those who have exposed themselves to sufferings for his sake? He has promised to them, that "he will render to them according to their works;" and "has He said, and will he not do it? Has He spoken, and will he not make it good?" He would even account himself "unrighteous, if he were to forget their works and labors of love, which they have showed towards his name, [Hebrews 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.10)." We may be sure, therefore, that, if tried in the fire, they shall "come out of it purified as gold! And that, however tempted, "they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life!"

***~~Now let me ask,~~***

***~~1. Who, besides the saints, possesses any such heritage as this?~~***

If we had crowns and kingdoms, they would not be worthy to be compared with this.

***~~2. Who ever confided in this promise, and was disappointed of his hope?~~***

Your fears may have been great, and your conflicts severe; but were you ever forsaken by your God? No! you must all bear testimony to his fidelity, even as Israel did of old. "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed! [Joshua 23:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 23.14)."

***~~#981~~***

***~~EXHORTATION TO RECEIVE THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1-3)~~***

KJV. "Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he who has no money, come you, buy and eat; yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

NIV. "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."

*We can never sufficiently admire the condescension and grace of God in noticing such insignificant and worthless creatures as we are.*That he should provide for our returning wants, and permit us to ask of him the things we stand in need of—may well excite our deepest astonishment! But that he should be as much interested in our welfare, as if his own happiness and glory depended on it, seems utterly incredible! Yet, that this is really the case, is manifest from the earnest invitations and entreaties, which he uses to prevail upon us to accept his free salvation!

In confirmation of this, we need only notice the passage before us, in which God, with inexpressible affection, labors to awaken the attention of sinners to their own truest happiness, and to bring them to the enjoyment of everlasting salvation.

In his words we may observe,

***~~I. An invitation.~~***

***~~No words could be devised that should more forcibly declare God's desire for our welfare.~~***

The blessings of the Gospel are here set forth under the most natural and expressive images.

What can be more refreshing than water?

What can be more reviving than wine?

What can be more nutritious than milk?

Yet these but faintly represent the operations of the Gospel on the soul of man. Nor can water or milk be by any means dispensed with; they are altogether necessary for human subsistence; so that on this account also are they fit emblems of spiritual blessings.

What would be the state of man, if there were:  
no Savior to atone for him,  
no Spirit to renew him,  
no God and Father to preserve and bless him?

On the contrary, how revived and animated is he by the promises of *pardon*and *peace*, of *holiness*and *glory!* Such then are the blessings which God offers to mankind. And to a participation of them he invites everyone who thirsts. Every person, whatever have been his character or conduct, is called; if only he thirsts, nothing shall be a bar to his acceptance.

Yet no man needs to decline the invitation, under the idea that he is not welcome, because he does not thirst enough; if he is willing, that is sufficient—so John expounds the passage in [Revelation 22:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.17).

Nor need anyone he discouraged at the thought that he has nothing with which to purchase these benefits; for though they are to be bought, it is "without money and without price;" and therefore those "who have no money" are particularly specified in the invitation. Indeed, if any man brings a price in his hand, he shall surely go empty away; Christ has paid the price; nor can we obtain anything, unless we are willing to receive it as the free gift of God through Christ.

The earnestness with which God entreats us to accept these blessings, is well worthy of our notice. He impersonates a herald standing in the place of public concourse, and, in the accustomed manner, calling the attention of all around him. He then expatiates on the blessings which he is ready to communicate, and the terms on which he will bestow them; he describes the people to whose necessities the blessings are suited, and to whose indigence the terms are more especially adapted; and then, as though he were determined to take no refusal, he cries, "Come," "come," "come!"

***~~And shall we despise such an earnest and gracious invitation?~~***

Let us but contemplate the *blessings*we are invited to partake of—how rich, how suitable, how necessary!

Let us reflect on the *terms*on which they are offered—can anything be more reviving?

Let us recollect *who*it is that calls us—is God incapable of supplying all our needs?

Let us consider his description of the *people invited*—can anything be more encouraging?

And shall we not be inexcusable, if we turn a deaf ear to such entreaties?

But God, knowing our extreme backwardness to go to him, urges us yet further by:

***~~II. An expostulation.~~***

The *despisers*of God's invitations may be comprised under two classes:

The worldly-minded.

The self-righteous.

The worldly-minded despise the Gospel, because they have no relish for spiritual things. The self-righteous despise the Gospel, because they think they have no need for it.

The worldling find their happiness in the pursuit and enjoyment of earthly things. The self-righteous find their happiness in self-applauding reflections on their own goodness.

But we may appeal to both, whether they have ever attained any abiding satisfaction in their respective courses?

Have pleasures, riches, or honors ever proved a source of solid peace? Are they "bread" proper for the soul? Does not the comfort derived from such things, fail us in the hour that we most need it? And will any satisfaction arise from the remembrance of them, when we stand at the bar of judgment?

Nor however laudable the conduct of the *self-righteous*may be in the sight of men, can it yield them the comfort they aspire after? It cannot satisfy either God or their own consciences. Not God, because it does not fulfill the demands of his Law. Not themselves, because they never can know that they have done enough to procure their acceptance with God; in the midst of all their boasted confidence, they have many misgiving fears lest they should have labored for nothing, and "spent their money for that which is not bread."

To impress this thought on our minds, God contrasts the blessings he offers with those which we foolishly prefer. He calls them "good," and declares that they will "delight the soul with fatness."

What is so needed as:  
a free and full pardon, to the *guilty*;  
a peace that passes all understanding, to the *troubled*;  
renewed strength, to the *weak*;  
and everlasting glory, to the *lost*?

Can these be received into the soul, and not comfort it? Can they be promised to us by a faithful God, and not satisfy the mind? Surely they are "food indeed, and drink indeed;" nor can they fail of filling us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

***~~Let us then call ourselves to an account for our conduct.~~***

Who among us has not had abundant experience of the insufficiency of everything except the Gospel, to make us happy? Shall we yet persist in our error? Shall we never cease to "hew out to ourselves broken cisterns," when we may have access to "the fountain of living waters?" Shall we still grasp at a shadow, while we lose the substance? Why do we act thus? What reason can we assign to ourselves for such obstinacy? What shall we answer to God, when he shall interrogate us respecting it in the day of judgment?

Shall we plead a lack of information? God has informed us.

Shall we say that the blessings of salvation were out of our reach? God has freely offered them to every one of us.

Lest anything should be lacking to affect our hearts, God confirms his invitation with,

***~~III. A promise.~~***

***~~There is nothing which God will not do for those who obey his call.~~***

Whatever a carnal man may enjoy, he has no right or title to eternal life. On the contrary, whatever a spiritual man may lack, this privilege he shall assuredly possess, "his soul shall live!" Nor shall this spiritual life be terminated like the life of the body; for God will make a covenant with him, "an everlasting covenant," a "covenant ordered in all things and sure;" so that everything necessary for the maintaining and perfecting of this life shall be secured to him. And as the Father gave unto his Son "the sure mercies of David" by raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand in Heaven, [Acts 13:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.34)—so will he bestow on his believing people everything that he ever promised unto his Church. Notwithstanding he may allow them for a time to be reduced to a most forlorn and desperate condition, as was the state of Christ when enclosed in the tomb, his mercies shall be "sure" to all his seed, and every soul among them shall in due season be exalted to a throne of glory in Heaven!

Lest we should still remain unmoved, God calls our attention to this promise, repeating his entreaties with all the energy and affection that words can express. "Hearken," says he, 'as to a distant sound which you are solicitous to hear. Hearken "diligently," not allowing anything to divert your attention for one moment, "incline your ear" as one that is afraid of losing a single word that is spoken to him. "Hear," determining to judge with candor, and to follow the dictates of sound wisdom.

'Do this,' says God, 'and the promise shall be yours; I pledge myself by covenant and by oath that your soul shall live, and that nothing that is truly good shall be lacking to you either in time or in eternity.'

***~~How incurably obstinate then must we be, if such accumulated means are used in vain!~~***

Is spiritual and eternal life a matter of such indifference, that a promise of it shall have no effect on our minds? Shall God engage himself to us by covenant and by oath to supply all our need both of body and soul, and shall we account his Word unworthy of our attention? Who ever experienced his blessings, and found them of no value? Whom has he ever deceived, that we dare not trust him?

Let us at least remember what an alternative we prefer: we reject eternal life, and happiness, and glory; and we embrace damnation and misery as our eternal portion. O that God might prevail at last! that we might now accept his gracious offers; and be made partakers of present and everlasting felicity!

***~~#982~~***

***~~CHRIST A WITNESS AND COMMANDER~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.4)~~***

KJV. "Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people."

NIV. "See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples."

Among the various means which God used for the spiritual benefit of his ancient people, one was, to provoke them to jealousy, by declaring that the blessings which they so abused would be transferred to another people, who would make a more suitable improvement of them.

From the beginning he warned them of this by *Moses*, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation! [Deuteronomy 32:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.21)."

Our *blessed Lord*and his Apostles frequently had recourse to this expedient; and Paul tells us that he had used it, not to irritate his countrymen, but, if possible, to save them, [Romans 11:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.11); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15).

The *Prophet Isaiah*had this object in view, in the passage before us. He has been expostulating with the Jewish people on their folly and impiety in not seeking after the blessings of salvation, and especially those blessings which God had covenanted to bestow upon them through their exalted Messiah. Compare verse 3 with [Acts 13:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.34). He tells them that God had given this Messiah, not, as they imagined, to them only, but to the whole Gentile world; who would eventually run to him, and embrace him, and become the heirs of those benefits, which the ungrateful Israelites neglected and despised.

That it is the Messiah who is here spoken of, there can be no doubt. He is often designated by the name of *David*, [Jeremiah 30:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 30.9). [Ezekiel 34:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 34.23-24). [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.5). He is "an unspeakable gift" to a ruined world! [2 Corinthians 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.15).

We propose to show:

***~~I. For what ends he is given.~~***

Doubtless he was sent for the salvation of man, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life, [John 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.16)." But there are two ends of his incarnation specified in the text; to which therefore we will confine our attention.

***~~1. He was given to be a Witness to the people.~~***

God had from all eternity devised a plan for the redemption of the world through the sufferings of his only-begotten Son. And of this plan the Lord Jesus Christ came to testify. For this office he was well qualified; having concerted the plan together with his Father; as it is written, "The counsel of peace was between them both, [Zechariah 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 6.13)."

Of this stupendous mystery, the Lord Jesus testified by the Prophets, hundreds of years before he came into the world. Not one word of all that they delivered on this momentous subject proceeded from themselves, "they spoke only as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, [2 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.21)," and as they were instructed "by an immediate inspiration from God, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.16)." The Spirit by whose sacred agency they were moved, was "the Spirit of Christ." "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow! [1 Peter 1:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.10-11)." Here both the subject and the author of their testimony are declared to be precisely such as we have affirmed. *It was of the wonders of redemption that they testified; and the Author of their testimony was Jesus Christ!*

In due time he came down from Heaven, and testified of these things in his own person. He had from all eternity been "in the bosom of his Father, [John 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.18)," and was privy to everything which the Father had ordained, [John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.20); and at the appointed season he came, "as a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers, [Romans 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.8)." As John informs us, "He who comes from Heaven is above all; and what he has seen and heard, that he testifies, [John 3:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.31-32)."

The light which he cast on this mystery was far greater than that which had been given to the Jewish Church; yet the time was not come for the full disclosure of it; he had many things to say, which the people could not hear while he was yet sojourning on earth, because the mystery itself yet remained to be accomplished, by his death, and resurrection, and ascension.

He therefore afterwards bore a fuller testimony by his Apostles; who, through that "unction of the Holy One who taught them all things" and "brought all things to their remembrance," "testified of the Gospel of the grace of God, [Acts 20:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.24)," and "declared the whole counsel of God" respecting it. To this effect John says, "We have seen and testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, [1 John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.14)." The record was the same, by whoever it was delivered; namely, "that God has given to us eternal life; and that this life is in his Son; he who has the Son, has life; and he who has not the Son of God, has not life, [1 John 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.11-12)." By whoever it was delivered also, it was equally "the testimony of Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:6," both as having him for its Author, and him for its end.

Hence the appropriate name of Christ, as designating the first great object of his Mission, is, "The faithful and true Witness, [Revelation 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5); [Revelation 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.14)."

***~~2. He was given to be a Leader and Commander to the people.~~***

*Moses*, in his day, was a witness from God, to make known to the Jewish people the Divine will.

But *Joshua*was the commander, who was to lead them into the Promised Land, and to give them a full possession of their inheritance.

The two offices are combined in Christ; who, while he is given for a Witness, is also given for "a Leader and Commander to the people." He even appeared to Joshua of old, "as Captain of the host of the Lord," from whom alone all Joshua's success should spring, [Joshua 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 5.14-15).

To us also is he revealed under the same blessed character, "The Captain of our salvation, [Hebrews 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.10)." He is at the head of all his people, and goes forth with them to battle; and all who have enlisted under his banners are to fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "behave like men, [2 Timothy 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.3). [1 Corinthians 16:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 16.13);" nor are they ever to cease from their conflicts until they have gained the victory, [1 Timothy 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.12). Indeed "through him they shall be more than conquerors, [Romans 8:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.37);" for he will never leave them, until he has fulfilled to them all that he has undertaken, and put them into possession of their promised inheritance! [Joshua 23:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 23.14).

From the ends for which he is given, we proceed to show,

***~~II. The manner in which he is to be received.~~***

This must correspond with God's design in sending him into the world.

***~~1. He must be received with a faith that wavers not.~~***

As he is a Witness to us—so we must listen to his testimony with childlike simplicity.

If he declares to us the plan of salvation—we must submit to it with the deepest reverence, and not for a moment dispute against it, or attempt to substitute in its place any plan of our own.

If he opens to us the great and precious promises which God has made in his Word—we must rely upon them, and expect their accomplishment with the most assured confidence.

If, on the other hand, he denounces the judgments of God against impenitent transgressors—we must tremble at his Word, and humble ourselves before him in dust and ashes.

As for all that men may say in opposition to his testimony, it must be to us of no greater weight than the dust upon the balance. Our answer must be, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them! [Isaiah 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.20)."

To sit at his feet, like Mary, must be the delight of our souls.

We must treasure up in our hearts his every word, even as his own mother did, while he was yet a child, [Luke 2:51](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.51).

We must "meditate on his sayings day and night, [Psalm 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 1.2)."

They must be "more to us than our necessary food, [Job 23:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 23.12)," and "sweeter to us than honey and the honey-comb."

If under any circumstances our faith in his Word begins to waver, we must be ashamed of ourselves, and mourn for it, as treating him with the greatest dishonor. Such conduct would be deemed a heinous offence even to a creature like ourselves; how much more offensive then must it be to him! It is nothing less than "making God a liar." This is the interpretation which God himself puts upon such conduct, [John 5:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.9-10). Let us dread lest we be found guilty of this sin. Let us "be strong in faith, giving glory to God!"

**2.** **He must be received with an obedience that has no reserves.**

The obedience which a soldier owes to his Commander is unbounded. The Commander has only to say, "Come," and he comes. "Go," and he goes. "Do this," and he does it. He does not think it any excuse for disobedience, that by following the command he shall have to encounter an enemy that will seek his life. On the contrary, the more dangerous the post is that is assigned to him, the more he considers himself bound to execute the command with promptitude and zeal; and, if he hesitates through fear, he is deemed unworthy to serve his prince; yes, he may account himself happy, if his life is not also forfeited as the penalty of his transgression.

Shall there then be any limit to the obedience which we shall render to our heavenly Leader?

Shall his commands be disobeyed through fear, or be executed with a timid trembling mind?

Shall not his *authority*awe us, and his *example*shame us, into a conduct more worthy of our profession?

Shall we not account it rather an honor to suffer for him, and be ready at any time, or in any manner, to lay down our lives for his sake?

Yes! We must fight the good fight of faith.

We must put on the whole armor provided for us, and go forth "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

We must be studious to learn from day to day, what is his will concerning us; and, once apprised of it, we must set ourselves instantly to obey it.

Does it call for self-denial? We should for his sake "mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Does it summon us to action? "Whatever our hand finds to do, we must do it with our might." We must be ever ready to "follow him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." There is nothing to which he calls us, which He has not himself both done and suffered—*he*, without any obligation on his part, except what his own love had imposed upon him; whereas *we*are bound by our allegiance to the God of Heaven, and by all our hopes of acceptance with him in the eternal world, to "war a good warfare;" for it is only by being "faithful unto death that we can ever obtain the crown of life, [Revelation 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.10)."

It is said in the words following my text, that the Gentiles to whom this Savior was given, "should run unto him, and glorify his name."

I call on you therefore to verify this prediction, and "not to receive the grace of God in vain." It is in this way only that you can show to the Jews what blessings you enjoy, and stir them up to seek a participation of them. And in this way alone, can you "walk worthy of your high calling," or "render to the Lord according to the benefits he has conferred upon you!"

***~~#983~~***

***~~OF SEEKING THE LORD IN TIME~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.6)~~***

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near!"

*There is scarcely any more striking proof of our insensibility with respect to eternal things, than the unconcern we show while death is casting his darts all around us!* If our neighbor's house were on fire—then we would exert ourselves to secure our own habitation from the flames. Yet we can hear of the deaths of others, and confess that we ourselves also are dying creatures—and still delay our preparation for death as much as if we were exempt from the common danger! *Every new instance of death is a voice from God to the survivors*; and speaks to them the very language of the text.

We need not give a formal exposition of the text, as it is our intention only to ground upon it a general exhortation to seek the Lord. Yet, that our plan may not be altogether concealed, we shall arrange our thoughts under the following observations.

***~~I. There is reason to fear that God, though essentially present with all—is spiritually and practically absent from the most of us.~~***

*It is probable that some among us may live in the occasional, if not also the habitual, commission of known and open sin.*

In some will be found drunkenness and lewdness;  
in others, falsehood and dishonesty;  
in many, pride and envy;  
in others, malice and revenge.

And are not these manifest tokens that they are strangers to the Divine presence? Can it be said of such people that God is truly with them?

*But even where the external deportment is blameless, and where the outward form of godliness is maintained, how little is there, for the most part, of its power!*Many read the Bible, and find it only a sealed book. They attend the ordinances of religion, but experience no delight in them. They pray in secret (if mere formal devotions can be called prayer) and derive no benefit to their souls. Whence is all this, but because God is absent from them?

If God were with them, then:  
his "words would be spirit and life" unto them, [John 6:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.63);  
their communion with him would be sweet;  
and the means of grace, though not always alike spiritual, would on the whole be accompanied with vital energy, and be followed with progressive sanctification.

Such, alas! is the state of the generality! However they may have witnessed the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, and have felt some alarm and terror in their souls—they are yet strangers to that "still small voice" in which the Lord reveals himself to his people, 1 Kings 19:11-13. We may say, in reference to what was spoken on a very different occasion: Lord, if you had been with them, they would not have been thus habitually dead and formal! [John 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.21); [John 11:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.32).

***~~II. We cannot hope to find him, if we do not seek him.~~***

We know that, in the ordinary course of providence, neither the countryman can fill his barns without much previous toil, nor the student acquire knowledge without much patient investigation. How then can it be supposed that we should attain the knowledge and enjoyment of God, without seeking after him in his appointed way? He has indeed sometimes been found by them that sought him not, and made known to them that inquired not after him, [Romans 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.20). But this must no more be expected by us, than that the sea should open a passage for our feet, or the sun stand still to lengthen out our day. God has said he will be inquired of by us, [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.37), and that we must ask, if we would have; and seek, if we would find, [Luke 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.9).

Nor is it in a cold indifferent manner that we must seek; we must strive as people in earnest, [Luke 13:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.24); and if once we get access to God, we must detain him, as it were, by force, [Genesis 32:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.26), and take his kingdom, as it were, by violence, [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12). And it is for lack of this holy zeal in our endeavors, that so many of us seek him throughout our lives, and never obtain a saving "acquaintance with him." We must also seek him in and through Christ; for it is by Christ alone that we can ever come unto the Father! [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6).

***~~III. There is a time coming, when, though we would seek him, he will not be found by us.~~***

This solemn truth is strongly intimated in the text; nor ought it to be concealed from our view. We all know that, *at the time of death, our opportunities of seeking God will be forever closed*, [Ecclesiastes 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 9.10). However earnestly we may implore the Divine favor, [John 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.4). [Matthew 25:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.11-12); [Matthew 7:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.22-23), or even the smallest expression of it, [Luke 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.24); [Luke 16:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.26), we shall ask in vain.

But our day of grace may also be terminated on this side of the grave. The Jews in the wilderness, [Psalm 81:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.11-12); [Psalm 95:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 95.11), and those who rejected our Lord's words, [John 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.21), and the greatest part of the Jewish nation at the time of his death, [Luke 19:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.42)—were given over to final impenitence, even while they continued in the full enjoyment of health, and of all outward privileges!

In the same way, we have reason to fear the same dreadful judgments, if we persist in slighting God's warnings, and in deferring our repentance, [Proverbs 1:24-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.24-31). How earnestly should we improve the present hour, if we duly considered this!

***~~IV. If we would sincerely seek him now, we would surely find him.~~***

This is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation! [2 Corinthians 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.2). God "is near" to us at present, both in his Word and ordinances, and he is willing to be found by every sincere worshiper. If indeed we have determinately set ourselves against him, and resisted all the motions of his Spirit, until he has ceased to strive with us—then it is possible that we may be already given up to final obduracy! [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.3). But if we feel any desire after God, then we may be sure that he has not yet cast us off; that very desire is, if we may so speak, a knock at the door of our hearts, whereby God intimates his willingness to take up his abode with us! [Revelation 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.20). Only let us nourish the latent spark; and we may be assured that he will not quench the smoking flax, [Matthew 12:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.20); he will not despise the day of small things, [Zechariah 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 4.10).

***~~We will not conclude this address without a more particular application of it to different people,~~***

**1. To the young.**

To you God has given an express promise that you shall not seek his face in vain, [Proverbs 8:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 8.17). Seek then to resemble those whose names are recorded for your encouragement, as having obtained mercy in their earliest years Samuel, Josiah, and Timothy, from their very childhood, and as being highly distinguished among the saints of God. And let not these years, which are so favorable for the reception of divine impressions, [Proverbs 22:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 22.6), be wasted in the service of sin and Satan.

**2. To the afflicted.**

Affliction is oftentimes the voice of God, [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9); and, if you have the wisdom to improve it, you also have a special promise that you shall find favor with God, [Psalm 50:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.15). Begin then "in the day of adversity to consider;" and you shall have no reason to regret the severity of the means, when once you have attained the end which God designs to accomplish by them.

**3. To the old.**

You above all should set yourselves to seek the Lord, because your day of grace cannot be continued much longer! It is a comfort, however, to reflect, that you may obtain mercy even at the eleventh hour, [Matthew 20:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.5-6). Let then your past time be redeemed with diligence; and, the shorter the space allowed you is for seeking the Lord, the more earnest let your exertions be to "know the things belonging to your peace, before they be forever hidden from your eyes."

***~~#984~~***

***~~ENCOURAGEMENT TO TURN TO GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.7)~~***

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon!"

We may discern many of the attributes of God, as wisdom, power, and goodness, in the works of creation. But it is from the book of Scripture alone, that we obtain the knowledge of his mercy and grace. The Heathen indeed entertain some faint ideas that God will pardon them; though they know not how to approach him with acceptance, nor have any assurance that they shall find acceptance with him. But we are invited by God himself to come unto him, and are encouraged by an express promise that he will pardon even the vilest of returning prodigals!

In the words before us, we may see:

**I. Our duty.**

All of us by nature are in a state of departure from God, and of subjection to sin. Hence our duty is:

**1. To forsake our sins.** "Let the wicked forsake his way."

Every one has some "way" which he has marked out for himself; some way that is suited to his age, his education, his circumstances in life, or his constitutional propensities.

Some are addicted to open vice;  
others to a more decent species of gaiety;  
others to the pursuit of riches;  
others to the more refined, though not less destructive, gratifications of literary pride;  
while others regard nothing but their ease, and the indulgence of their peculiar habits.

But whatever our ways are, if they are not such as are prescribed in the Scripture, and such as lead directly to Heaven—they must be "forsaken." We may indeed, and must, attend to our earthly duties; but in them, as well as in our religious exercises, we must seek the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts."

We must moreover forsake our "thoughts." Even those who are most correct in their *conduct*, will find abundant matter for humiliation in their "thoughts!" What proud thoughts arise even from their supposed superiority to others! What vain, angry, envious, worldly, covetous, impure, and unbelieving thoughts lodge within us all, and find a welcome reception in our hearts! These thoughts then, no less than our ways, must be "forsaken." We must watch and pray against them, and labor to have our minds occupied with holy and heavenly contemplations!

**2. To turn unto our God.**"and let him turn unto the Lord"

As it is from God that we have departed, so it is unto God that we must return; nor will any reformation of our lives, or even renovation of our hearts, avail us, if this further change is not accomplished within us.

We must turn to him in humility. All of us, without exception, are guilty before God. Let us, even the best among us, only mark what our thoughts most easily recur to, and what they fix upon with the greatest frequency and delight, in those seasons when there is nothing particular to engage them—and we shall find no great cause for self-commendation and self-delight. Such a view of ourselves would show us what we are before Him "who searches the heart and tries the thoughts;" and would convince us that we need to abase ourselves before him with self-loathing and self-abhorrence.

We must also turn to him in faith. There is but one Mediator between God and man, whose merits and intercession must be the only grounds of our hope. In him, even in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must trust; we must make mention of his name and of his righteousness, even his only; and we must believe that God, for his sake, is willing to accept the very chief of sinners.

We must yet further turn to him in an unreserved devotedness both of heart and life. Mark how entirely the heart of an unregenerate man gives itself to the world! It is not that he never engages in religious duties; but whatever he does, his affections are set upon things below, and not on things above. The very reverse of this is our duty; we are not to be so occupied with heavenly pursuits, as to neglect the duties of our place and station; but, in the midst of all our earthly occupations, God must have our hearts! *His commands must be the reason, his Word the rule, and his honor the end—of all our actions. To fulfill his will, and enjoy his presence, should be the main object of our lives!*

Nor shall we decline this duty, if we consider what the text proposes for,

***~~II. Our encouragement.~~***

***~~God will "show mercy" to returning penitents.~~***

If it were doubtful whether our efforts would prove effectual for our salvation, we would not readily undertake the work of mortifying sin, and of turning unto God. But there is no doubt; for God delights in the exercise of mercy, "judgment is his strange work," to which he is utterly averse, "he wills not the death of any sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." He invites us and expostulates with us in the most tender manner, "Turn! Turn! Why will you die?" Will you not be made pure? O, when shall it be? Let but the assurances of mercy which the Scripture affords to penitent sinners be considered, and no one will lack a motive for abandoning his sins, and for returning to his God.

He will "abundantly pardon" transgressions, however multiplied they may have been!

Those whose iniquities have been heinous and long-continued, are apt to despond, and to imagine themselves beyond the reach of God's mercy. But none need to despair, for God's mercy is infinite! And though our sins may have been as numerous as the sands upon the sea-shore, his mercies will far exceed them, "as the Heaven is high above the earth, so *great*is his mercy toward those who fear him!"

See what sinners have been forgiven! mark the transgressions of David, Manasseh, Peter, and others; see the peculiar aggravations of their guilt! and then say whether God will not multiply his pardons to the very utmost extent of our necessities? After such a view of God's mercy, our hearts must be harder than adamant, if we refuse to repent, and to turn unto him!

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. To those who presume upon God's mercy.~~***

You are at ease, because God is merciful; but are his mercies ever promised to those who live and die in rebellion and sin? Are not rather his judgments denounced against them? Search the Scriptures, and see if you can find one word to comfort those who persist in willful impenitence. Alas! you will soon find to your cost, that, as God is merciful to repenting sinners—so will he fulfill the declaration, that "unless you repent, you shall all perish!"

***~~2. To those who limit God's mercy.~~***

Satan's first device for the retaining of sinners under his dominion is, to represent God to them as a Being who is too merciful to punish them. His next endeavor is to make them believe that their sins are too great to be forgiven, and that there is not mercy enough in the heart of God to pardon such transgressors as they are. But, if any of us are tempted to entertain such thoughts of God, let us only reflect upon the words of the text, and the many passages of Scripture which illustrate and confirm them, and we shall see at once the folly and impiety of limiting his mercies. Let such people at least put the matter to a trial; and they shall find, by sweet experience, that "whoever comes unto him, he will never cast out."

**3.** **To those who abuse God's mercy.**

Are there those in the world, who, because they have obtained mercy (as they think), are remiss in "working out their salvation?" Are there those who imagine that, because they have "once overcome the world, they may be again entangled therein, and overcome" by it, without any danger to their souls? Let them know that they are fatally deluded! and that, if they do not awake from their stupor, "their last end will be worse than their beginning." If the mercy of God does not stimulate us to a sincere renunciation of all sin, and an unremitting activity in his service, we shall in vain hope that it shall be exercised towards us in the day of judgment.

**4.** **To those who enjoy God's mercy.**

What reason have you to admire and adore the goodness of your God! O, let a lively sense of it be ever on your minds. Be meditating daily how you shall most acceptably express your *gratitude*towards him. Labor to *glorify*him to the uttermost. Commend him to your fellow-sinners. Let your "ways" be such as shall be well-pleasing in his sight. Let your "thoughts" be devoutly occupied in praises and thanksgivings to him. And let your fellowship with him become daily more sweet, more intimate, and more abiding. Thus shall his mercy, which has already abounded towards you, be displayed in yet richer communications to all eternity!

***~~#985~~***

***~~GOD'S WAYS ABOVE OUR WAYS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.8-9)~~***

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts!"

*Men are apt to judge of God's ways, and to suppose him restricted by such laws as they deem proper for their own observance.*The wicked almost reduce him to a level with themselves in a moral view, [Psalm 50:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.21); and even the godly form very inadequate conceptions of his ways and works. Of this God himself apprises us in the words before us; which we shall elucidate by showing how different his thoughts and ways are from what we should have expected with respect to,

**I. The objects of his choice.**

If we thought to take a person into the nearest relation to ourselves, we should be inclined to prefer one of high rank; if we undertook to instruct a person, we should select one who was intelligent and docile; or if we purposed to confer any favor, we should look out for an object that was worthy of it. But God acts in a very different manner!

He takes the poor in preference to the rich, [Matthew 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.5). [James 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.5). [John 7:48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.48).

He takes the ignorant before the wise, [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26). [1 Corinthians 1:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.19-20).

He takes, in many instances, the vile before those, whose lives have been more moral, [Matthew 21:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.31-32); [Matthew 19:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.20-22). contrasted with [Luke 7:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.37); [Luke 7:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.47) and [1 Timothy 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 1.13).

Not that God disregards morality, where it flows from proper principles, and has respect to his glory; but his grace is his own, [Matthew 20:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 20.15); and he will impart it to whoever he will, [Romans 9:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.15-16), without accounting himself responsible to any for the distribution of his favors, [Job 33:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 33.13). [Romans 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.20).

This exactly accords with the experience of the primitive saints. See [2 Samuel 7:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 7.18-19). [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.26-29), and with the Church of God in every age and place.

**II. The extent of his love.**

If we were told that God would show mercy to our sinful race—what would we have supposed to expect at his hands? We would scarcely have raised our thoughts higher than an exemption from punishment. Indeed, this is the limit which unenlightened men universally assign to God's mercy, "He is merciful, therefore he will not punish."

Who would have ever thought, that he would so love us, as to give his only dear Son to die for us?

Who would have conceived, that he would moreover send his Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts as our instructor, sanctifier, and comforter?

Who would have imagined that he should give himself to us, with all that he is, and all that he has, as our present and everlasting portion?

Is not all this "as much above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth?"

**III. The methods by which he accomplishes towards us the purposes of his grace.**

Supposing us informed that God would take us to Heaven, we would be ready to think, that certainly he would deliver us at once from temporal affliction, and more especially from spiritual conflicts. Would it ever enter our minds, that the objects of his eternal love should be left to endure the pressures of poverty, or the agonies of a cruel death? Could we once imagine, that they should be exposed, year after year, to the assaults of Satan; and be allowed, on many occasions, to wound their consciences, to defile their souls, and to grieve his Spirit, by the commission of sin?

Yet these are the ways in which he deals with them, and it is by these means that he "fulfills in them the good pleasure of his goodness. God does not approve of sin, or tempt to sin; but he*makes use of the sins which men commit, to humble them in the dust, and to magnify his own superabounding mercy*, [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20-21). Thus he permitted the fall of Peter, and overruled it for good, [Luke 22:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.31-32); but that permission neither excused, nor extenuated Peter's guilt. The sin was the same, whether it were pardoned or punished; but *the grace of Christ was eminently displayed in the pardon of it*; and backsliders have over since derived much encouragement from thence (not to deny their Lord, but) to repent, and turn to God."

Nor is this a mere arbitrary appointment; for, by these means, he reveals to us far more abundantly the riches of his grace, and affords us more ample grounds for praise and thanksgiving! The deliverance given to the Israelites was not a little enhanced by their oppression in Egypt, and their subsequent embarrassments. The way is circuitous indeed; but it is the *right*way to the promised land, [Psalm 107:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.7).

**Improvement.**

***~~1. How should we magnify and adore our God for the blessings of his grace!~~***

Well may every child of God exclaim with wonder: What manner of love is this with which you have loved me, that you should give your only dear Son to redeem me by his blood, and your eternal Spirit to sanctify me by his grace?

In the review of his own life he may well add, 'Why me, Lord? Why have you chosen me, and borne with me, and plucked me as a brand out of the burning? Why too have you used such methods for my recovery and salvation?' Yes truly, in the review of all these mercies, he must of necessity exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and let all that is within me bless his holy name."

***~~2. How submissive should we be under the darkest dispensations of his Providence!~~***

While we are saying, with *Jacob*, "All these things are against me," perhaps the very dispensations, of which we so complain, are absolutely necessary to our eternal welfare. Perhaps something which has met us unexpectedly has been, like *Abigail*, God's messenger to keep us from some deadly sin. [1 Samuel 25:17-33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 25.17-33).

Let this thought silence every murmur, and encourage us to say, even in the most afflictive circumstances, "Though he slay me—yet will I trust in him! [Job 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 13.15)."

***~~3. How should we acknowledge God even in the most trivial occurrences!~~***

There is no occurrence really trivial, or unimportant; for there is such a *chain of causes and effects*fixed in the Divine purpose, that the most important events depend on circumstances which seem to us altogether trifling and contingent, [Luke 19:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.3-4); [Luke 19:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.9). Let the life of *Joseph*be surveyed, and we shall find that a thousand different things, apparently casual and independent, concurred to accomplish God's promises towards him. Thus it is with respect to us; and it is our privilege to "acknowledge God in all our ways," and to commit ourselves wholly to his guidance.

***~~4. What a glorious place will Heaven be!~~***

There the whole of the Divine dispensations towards us will be opened to our view. There Gods "ways, which were in the great deep, and his footsteps, which were not known," nor perhaps capable of being comprehended by us in this world—will be clearly seen. O! what wonders of love and mercy shall we then behold! With what rapture shall we then exclaim, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.33)." Let us then wait a few days; and the most painful events of this life shall be a source of everlasting joy!

***~~#986~~***

***~~RESEMBLANCE OF THE GOSPEL TO RAIN AND SNOW~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.10-11)~~***

KJV. "As the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whitherto I sent it."

NIV. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it!"

The more just our views of God's perfections are, the more firm and enlarged will be our expectations from him. We are apt to distrust his mercy and love, because we "judge him to be such a one as ourselves;" whereas, if we considered how infinitely remote his ways and thoughts are from ours, we would repose the most unlimited confidence in him, and have every fear swallowed up in the contemplation of his power and grace. These considerations are proposed by God himself as an encouragement to us to return from our evil ways; and, in the words before us, we are assured that the blessings which he will convey to us through the medium of his Word, shall be as free, as certain, as abundant, as those which he imparts to the earth by means of the rain and snow.

In illustrating this comparison, we shall trace the resemblance between the Word, and the rain or snow:

***~~I. In their origin.~~***

***~~"The rain and snow come down from Heaven".~~***

If the whole world would unite their efforts to produce rain, they would never accomplish their end. It is God who forms the clouds, and causes them to water the earth; and therefore to him we must acknowledge ourselves indebted for every shower that falls. Of this we are frequently reminded in the Scriptures, [Psalm 147:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 147.8). [Job 38:25-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 38.25-28); and the gods of the Heathen are challenged, if they can, to exert a similar power, and thus establish their right to the honors ascribed to them, [Jeremiah 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 14.22).

***~~The word of the Gospel also "comes forth out of God's mouth".~~***

It proceeded from God originally; the words of "prophecy came not of men; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, [2 Peter 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.21)." Yes, "all Scripture," and not the prophetic parts only, "was given by inspiration of God, [2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 3.16)."

Moreover the Gospel, when faithfully preached, is also at this time from God. It is God who instructs his servants, and qualifies them to declare his truth; and the Word delivered by them is, "not the Word of man, but in truth the Word of God." We do not mean to insinuate, that any people now have the same kind of inspiration which was given to the Apostles; but every faithful minister is taught and directed by God what to say, and is assisted in the delivery of his message, [Matthew 28:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.20). And though we cannot strictly apply to ourselves such passages as [Mark 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 13.11), and [Luke 21:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 21.14-15), yet they teach us what assistance to expect from Christ, provided we apply to him in the diligent use of means. As an ambassador of God, he speaks altogether in God's name, and may address every one of his audience in the words of Ehud to Eglon, "I have a message from God to you! [Judges 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 3.20)."

But the resemblance between the Word and the rain is yet more strongly marked,

***~~II. In their operation.~~***

***~~The "rain and snow" are the means of rendering the earth fruitful.~~***

If the earth is only a few months without rain, the most calamitous consequences ensue. See [Jeremiah 14:2-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 14.2-6). But if the parched and thirsty earth be visited with rain or snow, its vegetative powers are revived, and it yields an abundance of food for man and beast, [Psalm 65:9-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 65.9-13). Yes, there is a sufficiency not only for the present consumption, but for sowing in order to a future crop.

***~~The Word of God also, is instrumental to the fructifying of the souls of men.~~***

God has many gracious ends to "accomplish" by his Word; sometimes he sends it to quicken the dead; and then even "the bones that are dry, very dry," are made to live! [Ezekiel 37:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.1-10). [Psalm 119:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.50). [James 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.18).

Sometimes he sends his Word to comfort the afflicted; and then it proves as balm to the wounded spirit, nor can the most distressed mind withstand its energy! [Psalm 107:8-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.8-20). [Deuteronomy 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.2).

Sometimes he sends his Word to sanctify the polluted; and then the most inveterate lusts give way, and his people are transformed into his image [John 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.3); [John 17:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.17). [Ephesians 5:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.26).

Finally, by its various operations he determines to save the lost; and behold, it stops not short of his purpose; it "prospers in the thing whitherto he has sent it," and becomes "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes! [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.16). 1 Corinthians 1:21."

An easterly wind may counteract the benefits which would accrue from the *rain*—but not all the powers of Hell shall be able to defeat the purposes of God, in sending his *Word*, "it never returns unto him void." As weak as it seems to be when delivered by sinful man—it yet is "sharper than any two-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.12);" it "casts down everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ, and brings into obedience to him" the heart that would resist its power! [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 10.4-5).

***~~Let us learn then from this beautiful comparison,~~***

***~~1. The importance of attending the preached Word.~~***

We know not when it is that God intends to send his Word home to our hearts; and therefore we should always be found waiting upon him in the way of his appointment. The man who was healed at the pool of Bethesda had been there many years; and if he had absented himself on the day that Jesus visited the place, he would have lost the blessing that was designed for him, [John 5:1-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.1-9). However long therefore we may have attended at the house of God, apparently in vain, it befits us still to tarry the Lord's leisure, and to expect the showers of his grace in due season!

***~~2. The danger of despising the Word.~~***

The text, though often interpreted as comprehending God's judicial purposes, does not properly relate to them; for, as the rain is not spoken of as deluging the earth, but only as rendering it fruitful, so the parallel between the Gospel and the rain should be drawn only as relating to *mercies*, and not to judgments.

Nevertheless we may notice in this place, that, as God sent his miracles to harden Pharaoh's heart, so *God may, and often does, send his Word to blind, and harden the hearts of proud opposers*. This was the end of the commission given to Isaiah, "Go and tell this people: Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.9-10)."

And, though it was not the primary intent of Christ when he preached to the people in parables, it constituted a part of his design in relation to the proud, caviling, and incorrigible Pharisees, [Luke 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 8.10). The same end is accomplished, though not primarily intended, in respect to thousands of infidels in every age, [Romans 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.8). [Acts 28:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.26-27). Beware then, lest God "take you in your own craftiness;" for whether you receive his Word or not, "it shall not go forth in vain!" If the Word is not "a savor of life unto life, it will prove a savor of death unto death! 2 Corinthians 2:16."

***~~3. The benefit of praying over the Word.~~***

It is not in the power of man to command a blessing on the word. "Paul may preach in vain, and Apollos water in vain, unless God gives the increase, [1 Corinthians 3:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6-7)." But if we pray to God, he will send us such a word as shall be suited to us; such a word as shall make us ready to think that the minister has received private information respecting us; such a word as shall reveal to us the secret sins of our hearts, [John 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.29), and constrain us to fall down on our faces, and confess that God is indeed present in his ordinances, [1 Corinthians 14:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 14.25). *The minister may draw the bow at a venture—but God will direct the arrow between the joints of the harness, and cause it to pierce our inmost souls!*[2 Kings 22:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 22.34).

Let us then pray that God would direct and assist the minister, and render his Word effectual to our good. Thus shall we secure to ourselves a blessing, and, like the refreshed earth, bring forth fruit suited to the culture bestowed upon us! [Hebrews 6:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.7).

***~~#987~~***

***~~THE CHANGE WROUGHT BY THE GOSPEL~~***

***~~[Isaiah 55:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.12-13)~~***

KJV. "For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

NIV. "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

***~~The change wrought annually on the face of nature from desolation and barrenness, to beauty and fruitfulness—is a lively representation of the change effected by the Gospel of Christ.~~***

"The rain and the snow descending on the earth" nourish the whole vegetable creation, and cause every part of it to spring forth in its appointed season.

In the same manner, "the Word of God, dropping as the rain, and distilling as the dew" upon the souls of men, infuses life into them, and renders them fruitful in every good word and work.

This is the parallel drawn by the prophet himself, who, expatiating on the subject, predicts, under the image of the Jews' return from Babylon, the progress of the Gospel in renovating the intellectual and spiritual world. His words will lead us to consider,

***~~I. The effects of the preached Gospel.~~***

The civilizing of the world is a very small part of the work which the Gospel is intended to accomplish.

**1. The gospel is sent to inspire new feelings.**

Man in his natural state is an entire stranger to spiritual *joy*, or solid *peace*. The peace that flows from a lack of foresight or reflection, and the joy that consists in mere physical gratifications, he may possess; but he is as destitute of spiritual enjoyments, as the brute creation are of intellectual pleasure! His state however, is wonderfully changed when he receives the Word of God in truth. At first indeed he feels trouble and anguish; but as soon as ever he has obtained a sense of his acceptance with God, his tears are wiped away, and "the bones which were broken rejoice." It frequently happens, especially where the preceding sorrows have been deep, that the joy which follows them is rapturous and abundant.

The surprise of Peter, on the eve of his expected execution, was not unlike that of a new convert; suddenly, a light shone in upon him, and his chains fell off, and the prison doors flew open, and an angel conducted him out, so that he could not persuade himself that he was awake, but thought he saw a vision. In the same way, when the new convert is first brought forth into light and liberty, and finds the obstacles, which had seemed insurmountable, removed—he is ready to think it must be all a delusion; it is with him as with those of old, "when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream; then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing;" yes, "the very hills break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands."

We must not however suppose, that all are equally elated; or that the joy which any feel will continue with them. It will rather subside into a peaceful tranquility of mind; they may go out with joy; but they will be led forth with peace. The Savior's joy, which is to be fulfilled in us, consisted rather in peace than exultation; and such is the legacy that he has left to us, [John 17:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.13); [John 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.27). At first we are like a stream rippling and murmuring near the fountain-head. But *in our more advanced state we resemble rather the deepened river flowing with silent majesty*.

***~~2. The gospel is sent to infuse new dispositions.~~***

A *thorn bush*is unproductive and worthless; as a *brier*is unseemly and injurious. The *thorn bush* is a just image of the more decent of mankind. The *brier* is a just image of the more profane. All are base and groveling in their nature, having no desires beyond this present world; and too many, by their influence as well as by their example, would impede the progress of those who are walking in the good way.

The *fir tree*on the other hand lifts its head on high; while the *myrtle tree*diffuses its fragrance all around. Both of them retain their verdure all the year.

Yet such shall the vilest of mankind become, when once they embrace the Gospel of Christ. They shall soar to Heaven with devout affections. They shall spread around them a sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ. They shall be unfading ornaments in the place where they grow. And instead of wounding, like the brier, all that come in contact with them—they shall, like the myrtle tree, emit the sweeter fragrance the more they are bruised, and perfume, as it were, the very hand that bruises them!

To impress our minds with a due esteem for the Gospel, let us proceed to consider,

***~~II. The excellency of those effects.~~***

There is an inherent excellence in holy dispositions, which, independent of the consequences flowing from them to ourselves or to society—must render them amiable in our eyes. But, as the text limits our views to the honor which accrues from them to God, we shall content ourselves with observing, that the change effected by the Gospel, is to the Lord:

***~~1. An occasion of praise.~~***

None who are quickened and renewed by the Word ever take the honor to themselves; all with one voice cry, "He who has wrought this change in us is God; therefore, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your name be the praise!" The greater the change that is wrought in any person's heart, the less will he be disposed to arrogate anything to himself on account of it; and most of all, "when the top-stone of the spiritual building shall be brought forth, will he shout, *Grace, Grace*unto it!" From his first acquaintance with divine truth will he begin to speak of God with love and gratitude. His own experience will furnish him with an inexhaustible fund of praise and thanksgiving. Nor will his acknowledgments any longer be a dull recital of an established creed, but the lively effusions of a grateful heart!

Now if that is deemed excellent, which causes the name of any human being to be held in estimation, and to be transmitted to posterity with honor—then how much more must that be excellent, which makes the name of God to be reverenced and adored!

**2. A monument of glory.**

It is not in this world only, that God is glorified by his redeemed people. "*When He comes on that day*, He will receive glory from His holy people, and be marveled at among all those who have believed! [2 Thessalonians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 1.10)."

At the day of judgment, every saint will be a monument to God's glory!

How God's sovereign grace will appear to every one among them, when each sees himself as a brand plucked out of the fire!

What stupendous wisdom will be manifested in the wondrous plan, whereby God has saved such undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners!

What marvelous patience will God be seen to have exercised towards them, under all their manifold failings and backslidings!

What unbounded mercy will be seen in His pardoning their multiplied transgressions, and saving them from eternal Hell!

Nor will His omnipotence be less an object of admiration, when it is seen how wonderfully it has been exerted in *converting*their souls, and in *preserving*them unto His heavenly kingdom!

Yes, as long as there shall exist one glorified saint in Heaven—so long shall the perfections of the Godhead be most eminently displayed in the salvation of sinful man! "All glory to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us. He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God His Father. All glory and power to Him forever and ever! Amen. [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6)."

How excellent then must that change be, which to all eternity shall be the brightest monument of the Divine perfections! The work of creation is excellent, though it is so soon to pass away; but that, glorious as it is—creation has no glory by reason of the glory that excels in the new creation.

**INFERENCES.**

***~~1. What encouragement have men to hear the Gospel!~~***

As a person who had never seen the face of nature but in the depth of winter, would scarcely conceive it possible that so great an alteration could take place in it as is annually made within the space of a few weeks—so are many ready to imagine, that their hard and barren hearts are incapable of experiencing such a change as God requires.

But his Word is as powerful as ever; it is still "like fire, or like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces." Wherever it is preached in sincerity and truth, there are some to attest its efficacy, and to prove, that "it is the power of God to the salvation of men."

Let none then despair; for though "the treasure is put into an earthen vessel, God will display the excellency of his power by means of it." He will plant the fir-tree and the myrtle where nothing grew but thorns and briers. "He will make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord."

***~~2. What a sure criterion have we whereby to judge of our state!~~***

An insensibility with respect to spiritual things, characterizes the natural man. A quickness of perception with respect to eternal realities, marks the person in whom the Word of God has taken due effect. Have we then surrendered up our false peace, and our carnal joy? Have we attained to a scriptural "joy and peace in believing?"

Look also to the tempers and dispositions of the soul; have the base and groveling desires of the carnal mind, been made to ascend to Heaven; and the natural aversion to holy exercises, been exchanged for a sincere delight in them? In short, is God now glorified in the whole of our deportment, so that, whoever beholds our spirit and conduct is constrained to admire the grace of God in us? Doubtless, this change is not perfect in any; nor can we expect it to be so, while we carry about with us this body of sin and death; but has the change begun?

O that on considering these questions we might have the testimony of our consciences that things are so!

***~~But if there is no evidence of these things, let us beware, lest, instead of being eternal monuments of God's love, we become objects of his everlasting displeasure!~~***

***~~#988~~***

***~~ACCEPTANCE FOR ALL SINCERE WORSHIPERS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 56:4-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.4-7)~~***

KJV. "Thus says the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

NIV. "For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant—to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

The concluding words of our text sufficiently show the scope of the whole passage. The chapter begins with proclaiming the approach of the Gospel dispensation, under which the way of obtaining righteousness and salvation through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ was to be fully revealed, verse 1.

In our text, the admission of all people to the benefits of that dispensation is insisted on; and it is declared, that "in every nation, he who fears God and works righteousness, whatever may be his disqualifications according to the law, shall be accepted. Compare [Acts 10:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.34-35)." Since God has a people scattered over the face of the whole earth, he will now have his Church open for the admission of every man.

In making known these gracious purposes, the prophet sets before us:

**I. The character which God approves.**

At no period did God ever approve of those who confined their obedience to the observance of any external rites or ceremonies. At all times he has spoken the same language, "My Son, give me your heart!" Accordingly in the description which is here given us of those who shall find acceptance with him, there are two marks whereby the people of God are universally distinguished:

***~~1. Their obedience to his will.~~***

Whatever conflicts they may have sustained in the earlier stage of their Christian experience, the first act which truly and properly designates them the Lord's people is, their "joining of themselves to him" as his people. Until they have done this in sincerity and truth, they cannot be acknowledged as his. There may indeed be circumstances wherein a public devotion of themselves to him cannot be expected; but where the situation admits of it, there must be a union with the Lord's people, and an open acknowledgment of Christ as their only Lord and Savior.

Nor must this be a mere empty profession; those who are upright before God will join themselves to him "to love and serve him" with their whole hearts! All other lords must be renounced; and God alone must be honored and obeyed.

Neither must this change be the result of fear alone; there must be a cordial consent of the will, and "a choosing of the things that please God." There will, it is true, be still "a law in their members warring against the law in their minds." *The deliberate purpose of every Christian's heart, must be to please God—God alone, God universally, God always!*

In one thing will they be particularly distinguished, that is, their reverence for the Sabbath, and their delight in sanctifying it to the Lord. This is twice mentioned in our text; and if we bear in mind that the whole passage relates to the times of the Gospel, we shall see, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is a duty of perpetual obligation; and that, however some of the ceremonial observances relating to it under the Law are abrogated, the spiritual improvement of it will characterize the Lord's people to the end of time.

Indeed this is one of the most prominent features in all who are truly upright before God; While the world at large make the Sabbath a day of carnal ease or pleasure, and the generality of those who profess some regard for it, sanctify only a part of it to the Lord, and that rather for conscience sake than because they have any pleasure in its duties—the upright devote to God and to the work of their souls the whole of it, and are as eager to improve that day for their spiritual advancement, as the ungodly are to improve the other six days for the advancement of their temporal welfare, [Isaiah 58:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.13-14).

***~~2. Their trust in his covenant.~~***

If we could suppose all these dispositions and actions to be united in a man who would disregard the Gospel covenant, they would never secure to the possessor the approbation of his God. The very best of men are sinners before God, and must seek for mercy in the way in which alone it will be given. The way which God has appointed, is through the covenant of grace; in which God has agreed to accept the atonement offered by his only dear Son, and to receive for his sake all who will plead the efficacy of that atonement.

If any man thinks that his own virtues will suffice to recommend him to God, he will be left to suffer the penalty due to his iniquities, and will perish under the accumulated guilt of having despised the salvation offered him in the Gospel.

In reading the Scriptures, we shall do well to notice how often "the keeping of God's covenant and his commandments" are united together. Neither of these can by any means be dispensed with; they are both necessary for their respective ends:  
the one, to obtain mercy with our offended God;  
the other, to manifest the sincerity of our faith and love.

We must bear in mind therefore, that a humble trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is quite as requisite for our acceptance with God, as any obedience to his commands can be; and that "the laying hold of God's covenant" is essential to the character of all who would be approved by him.

Such being the character portrayed in our text, we proceed to notice the terms in which God has described,

***~~II. The approbation with which he will honor it.~~***

Whatever disadvantages such a person may labor under, God will:

***~~1. Accept him in all of his services.~~***

Eunuchs and strangers were disqualified by the Law from entering into the congregation of Jehovah, [Deuteronomy 23:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 23.1-8). But God promises, under the Christian dispensation, to admit all without any exception, provided their dispositions and habits be such as he approves; yes, God himself will "bring them to his holy mountain, [Hebrews 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.22)," by sending his shepherds to search them out, and to bring them upon their shoulders rejoicing!

Moreover, God will "make them joyful in his house of prayer." This is a blessing experienced by none but those who are truly upright. In the gathered church indeed, the vilest hypocrites may be delighted, [Ezekiel 33:30-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.30-32); and it would be well if the undue preference given to preaching, and the late attendance at public worship, observable among religious professors in the present day, did not give reason to fear, that their religion is in their ears only, and not in their hearts.

Certain it is, that, among those who are truly upright, such conduct would be abhorred; they delight to draw near to God, and to pour out their hearts before him; and this, not only when some fluent person is exhibiting his gifts, but when the prayers of our Liturgy (better than which were never composed by mortal man) are offered up in the presence of the congregation. The man that has not his heart in tune for such prayers as those, has yet to learn what his needs are, and what should be the posture of his soul before God. To the penitent and contrite soul, they will often be as marrow and fatness; and to join in them will be the sublimest pleasure he can enjoy!

While they "draw near to God, God will also draw near to them," and will "manifest his acceptance" of them by some special tokens of his love. In former times he often testified his acceptance of the sacrifices by sending fire from Heaven, to consume them upon the altar. Now he will do the same, as it were, in a more secret way; he will send his Spirit into the soul as a Spirit of adoption, he will "shed abroad his love there," and will fill it with an abundance of grace and peace!

***~~2. He will number them among his most-favored servants.~~***

To be childless was, under the Jewish dispensation, accounted a misfortune, and even a disgrace; and people considered themselves as living in their posterity. Of this happiness the people addressed in our text were deprived; but God assured them, that "he would give them a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters." Their children, even if they were as numerous as those of Ahab, might be cut off in a few hours, and their inheritance in Israel might be lost; but God would give to them a name and an inheritance that would endure forever.

To every one that answers to the foregoing character is this promise made; and to every one shall it assuredly be fulfilled in its season, [Revelation 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.12). Even at this time have they the pledge of these blessings in their souls; and in due time they shall possess them in all their fullness! [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2).

***~~Improvement.~~***

In this view of our subject we have,

**1. An antidote to despondency.**

Those who are upright in heart are still, as formerly, ready to entertain desponding fears, and to imagine that there is something in their situation and circumstances which renders their case peculiarly hopeless. But God delights to encourage such people with the most consolatory declarations, [Isaiah 40:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.27-28). Do not let any sincere believer then say, "I am a dry tree," or suppose that he is incapable of yielding fruit to God; for those who are "farthest off, may yet be brought near by the blood of Christ! [Ephesians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.12-13)." "Strangers and foreigners," if they embrace and obey the covenant of grace, shall become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God! [Ephesians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.19)."

***~~2. A stimulus to exertion in the cause of Christ.~~***

The same principle of unbelief which discourages men in relation to *themselves*, operates powerfully to repress their exertions for *others*. The state of the heathen is thought to present insurmountable obstacles to their conversion. But the most ignorant savages are not farther from a reception of the Gospel, than eunuchs and strangers were from communion with the Jewish Church! Yet these have already found access to God; why therefore may not they? Indeed we are assured by the prophet, that the remotest Gentiles shall be gathered to the Lord, [Isaiah 60:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.3); and our Lord himself confirms the joyful truth, verse 8.

Let us then open wide the door of God's house to the Gentile world; let us encourage them to "lay hold on his covenant;" and let us, each according to his ability, labor to hasten forward that glorious day, when all the nations of the earth shall be converted to the Lord, and "become one fold under one Shepherd! [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.16)."

***~~#989~~***

***~~THE MAJESTY AND HOLINESS OF GOD~~***

**[Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.15)**

KJV. "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

NIV. "For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

*There is nothing more vain than creature-confidence; it is sure to provoke the displeasure of God, and ultimately to disappoint ourselves.*On the contrary, a humble trust in the Lord will secure to us his effectual aid; it will avail for the weakest of the human race, and prove sufficient under the most arduous circumstances. The testimonies of Scripture to this effect are numerous and decisive, [Jeremiah 17:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 17.5-8).

In the passage before us God reproves the Jews for forming alliances with the heathen; and, having derided their vain hopes, and declared the security of those who should trust in him, issues a solemn proclamation for the direction and comfort of his Church in all ages.

In these words we behold:

***~~I. The character of God.~~***

The perfections by which God is pleased to characterize himself in this place were peculiarly calculated to expose the folly of those whom he was reproving, and to dispel the fears of those whom he designed to comfort. He mentions,

***~~1. His majesty.~~***

In delineating the greatness of any created being, we are enabled to convey some just ideas by comparing one thing with another—but in speaking of God there is no room for comparison. The universe is but as an atom, and the whole period of its existence but as a point, before him! He is not only high and lofty, but exclusively "the high and lofty One." He fills all space; he exists through an unsuccessive eternity. *In attempting to declare him, we do but "darken counsel by words without knowledge*." There are indeed in Scripture some representations given us, whereby we may attain such knowledge of him as our weak capacities are able to receive: [Isaiah 40:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.12); [Isaiah 40:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.15); [Isaiah 40:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.17); [Isaiah 40:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.22); [Isaiah 66:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.1). [Psalm 104:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 104.1-3). [1 Kings 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 8.27). [Jeremiah 23:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.21); but *it is very little that we can conceive of him, through all the images in Heaven and earth were exhibited in their brightest colors and in the most energetic language*. The Scripture itself tells us that "his greatness is unsearchable! [Psalm 145:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.3). Can we sum up our knowledge of him better than in those expressive words of Moses, "From everlasting to everlasting you are God! [Psalm 90:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 90.2)."

***~~2. His holiness.~~***

The "name" is that whereby any person is known. As applied to God, his name comprehends everything whereby he is known to men.

The perfections of his nature,  
the works of his hands,  
the dispensations of his providence,  
and the declarations of his grace,  
all are holy! [Psalm 145:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.17).

His hiding of his face occasionally, even from his dearest people, is no exception to this. See [Psalm 22:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.1-3)." And as he is holy in himself, so he cannot endure anything which is defiled by sin, "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! [Habakkuk 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 1.13)." Indeed *holiness is the very perfection that stamps a worth and excellence on all the other attributes of God.* Without holiness . . .  
his *wisdom*would be craftiness,  
his *power*would be tyranny,  
his *mercy*would be a weak, indiscriminate, or partial favor.

Glorious as he is in every perfection, he is declared more especially to be so in holiness, [Exodus 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.11); and the angels in Heaven make it the more immediate subject of their incessant praises, [Isaiah 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.3). [Revelation 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.8). God himself is pleased to distinguish this perfection in a peculiar manner by making it the pledge of his fidelity in a most solemn oath, [Psalm 89:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 89.35); nor does he less surpass all created beings in holiness than he does in greatness and majesty, "There is none holy as the Lord," says the Scripture, [1 Samuel 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.2); and again, "You alone are holy, [Revelation 15:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 15.4)."

But, notwithstanding he is so great, that "the Heaven of heavens cannot contain him," and so holy, that "the very heavens are not pure in his sight"—yet will he "humble himself to behold the things in Heaven," and to "dwell with men on the earth." This will appear by considering,

**II. The objects of his love.**

After the description which he has given of himself we shall not wonder that the great objects of his regard are:

***~~1. The holy.~~***

Heaven is a region of holiness, in which not even the angels, after they had transgressed, were allowed to dwell. All who remain there are holy as God is holy. The saints too that are around the throne are all "equal to the angels themselves, [Luke 20:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 20.36)." Once indeed they were defiled by sin; but they were washed from their sin in the fountain of Christ's blood; and were renewed after the divine image by the Spirit of their God. Among these God "dwells in the high and holy place;" and though "their righteousness cannot profit him," yet he accepts the tribute of their praise, and scatters the tokens of his love among them in rich profusion. The cup of every one among them overflows with joy; and the "weight of glory," with which their heads are crowned, is commensurate with their ability to sustain it. Hence is Heaven justly called, "The habitation of his holiness and his glory! [Isaiah 63:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.15)."

***~~2. The humble.~~***

As God loves holiness where it is perfect, so he loves the *desire*after holiness where it is yet imperfect. "The humble" are those who have a just sense of their weakness and sinfulness; and "the contrite" are they who deeply bewail their state before God. Not that they mourn merely on account of the *judgments*they dread; but principally on account of their having so debased their own souls, and so grieved the Holy Spirit.

Yes, *if they are truly humble, they most of all loath and abhor themselves, when they are most assured that God is pacified towards them!* [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.63). Such penitents, whatever they may have been in the past, are no less the objects of God's favor than the angels themselves; yes, if there were but one such person to be found on the face of the whole earth, God would fix his eyes on him with pleasure and delight! [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2). He would listen to his groans with parental tenderness, and treasure up his tears in his vial, as the most valuable monuments of true contrition! [Psalm 56:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.8). He would bind up the wounds which sin had made, and pour the oil of joy and gladness into the disconsolate soul. God well knows that nothing but his presence with the soul will fully satisfy its desires, or answer the purposes of his love; on this account he will lift up the light of his countenance upon it. As he formerly dwelt in the tabernacle by the visible symbols of his presence, so will he condescend to dwell invisibly in the contrite heart, making it his habitation, on purpose "that he may revive" and comfort it.

***~~This subject will enable us to rectify some mistakes which very generally prevail in the Christian world:~~***

**Mistake 1.** That God is pleased with those who are pleased with themselves.

It is common for moral and sober people to think that God entertains as high an opinion of them as they do of themselves; and to despise the poor and contrite as weak enthusiasts.

But what warrant have they for their presumptuous confidence? Can they find any declaration of God in their favor? Has he ever said that he would dwell with them?*Even in Heaven there are no self-admiring thoughts entertained either by men or angels*. The *cherubim*veil their faces and their feet while they serve God, [Isaiah 6:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.2). All the *glorified saints*cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, as unworthy of the honor conferred upon them, [Revelation 4:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.10-11). How much less then can there be any ground for such a disposition on earth!

The Scripture tells us, it was not the proud Pharisee, but the sell-condemning Publican that "went down to his house justified." And to all eternity will it be found true, that "he who exalts himself shall be abased, and that he alone who sincerely humbles himself, shall ever be exalted!"

**Mistake 2.** That a consciousness of our guilt is a ground for concluding that God is our enemy.

Sin surely renders us liable to the Divine displeasure; but it is sin *unrepented*of, and not merely sin *committed*, that shall condemn us. "The broken and contrite heart God will not despise, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17)," and the more contrite we are, the more reason we have to hope that God is reconciled towards us. But there are some, who, contrasting their own baseness and sinfulness with the majesty and holiness of God, are ready to say, "There is no hope."

Do not let such people however be discouraged; for "though God is high—yet will he have respect unto the lowly, [Psalm 138:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 138.6)." Yes, he not only *will*dwell with such people, but actually *does*dwell with them; this is God's own assertion in the text; and it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to believe him.

**Mistake 3.** That the exercise of serious and deep repentance will deprive a man of all the comforts of life.

*Repentance will surely deprive us of all pleasure in sin.* But is there no other source of happiness than sin? May not all the gratifications of sense, and all the comforts of society, be enjoyed in a way of righteousness, as well as in the ways of sin? But even supposing we were deprived of these, would not the presence of God in our souls compensate for the loss of them? Is it nothing to have God "manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world," yes, "dwelling in us, and reviving us" with the consolations of his Spirit! Or *does a man stand in need of a candle, while he enjoys the light of the meridian sun?*Away then with all ungrounded jealousies on this head. Let us seek to experience the comforts of religion, instead of ignorantly asserting that there are none to be found. And, instead of reprobating the communications of grace and peace to the soul as enthusiastic and absurd, let us pray that we ourselves may be "the temples of the Holy Spirit," "the habitation of God through the Spirit" forever and ever.

***~~#990~~***

***~~GOD'S MERCY TO THE MOST OBSTINATE SINNERS~~***

**[Isaiah 57:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.17-18)**

KJV. " For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."

NIV. "I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him!"

"Against You, You only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight. So that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge!" [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.4)

The wickedness of man and the mercy of God mutually illustrate each other. The heinousness of sin is supremely manifested in that it is committed against a God of infinite goodness and compassion!

Nor is there anything that magnifies the love of God more, than the unworthiness of the object towards whom that love is exercised.

This observation is suggested to us by numberless passages of Scripture, in which a contrasted view of man's depravity and God's mercy is presented before our eyes! Nor shall we ever find more ground for this observation, than in the words which we have just read. In this we may see,

***~~I. The controversy which God has with sinners.~~***

***~~Iniquity, however secret the commission, or subtle in its appearance—is hateful and abominable in the sight of God!~~***

There is no sin more frequently concealed from the view of those who harbor it, than covetousness. It assumes the names of prudence and economy; and, under the semblance of care for one's family, is too generally regarded as a virtue. If it does not instigate us to the violation of common honesty, or totally deaden all the feelings of humanity, covetousness is applauded by others, and serves as a foundation for self-approbation and self-delight. But the love of money is the root of all evil! [1 Timothy 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim 6.10). It is a base lust! It is the vilest idolatry! [Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.5). Covetousness sets up mammon in preference to God; and must therefore of necessity provoke the Lord to jealousy.

But we are not to confine our views to this particular sin; this indeed was predominant among the Jews, as it is among us; but it is here mentioned only as indicating the general depravity that prevailed among them.

While God notices it with abhorrence, he shows, by many visible marks, his indignation against it.

God is not an unconcerned spectator of iniquity. Delighted as he is in exercising mercy—he is not inattentive to the demands of justice, or indifferent about the honor of his holiness. On the contrary, he is "angry," and justly angry, with the workers of iniquity; nor does he fail to manifest his displeasure against them. He "hides himself" from them, withdrawing those gracious influences which he had at any time bestowed, and withholding those communications of light and strength, which he might otherwise have imparted to them. He "smites them" either with temporal or spiritual calamities. Perhaps he visits them with *sickness*in their own persons, or trouble in their *families*, or distress in their *circumstances*; and if they would inquire of God, they might find the cause of their calamities to be some hidden abomination which he is punishing. See [Acts 12:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 12.23) and [1 Corinthians 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.30); [1 Corinthians 11:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 11.32).

Perhaps the judgments are rather of a spiritual nature; he "hews them by his prophets," and at the same time smites them with judicial blindness and obduracy, [Hosea 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.5). [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.9-10). [Exodus 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.4). He gives them over to their own delusions, [Isaiah 66:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.4). He seals them up under final impenitence and unbelief, [2 Thessalonians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.11). [Romans 1:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.24); [Romans 1:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.26); [Romans 1:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.28). These strokes are terrible in proportion to the insensibility with which they are received; and the less the sinner's apprehension of danger is, the more awful is the judgment inflicted on him.

But *Divine chastisements, unattended with the operations of grace, never produce the desired effect.*

Notwithstanding ten successive plagues, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart against God. Thus it is with sinners in general; they either relent not at all, or, like metal taken out of the furnace, relapse immediately into their former state of obduracy.

For the most part, "though God strikes them, they will not grieve; though he even consumes them, they refuse to receive correction; they make their faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return, [Jeremiah 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 5.3)." "They go mad over their idols;" so that though, like Ezekiel's followers, they delight to hear the word, they will not do it, but still yield to the corrupt bias within them. "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain, [Ezekiel 33:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.31)."

Too many of them, instead of being reclaimed by God's chastisements, continue, like Ahaz, to trespass yet more and more against him! [2 Chronicles 28:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 28.22).

Now then how shall this controversy be brought to a successful outcome?

***~~II. The way which he takes to terminate it.~~***

One might well suppose that God, who sees iniquity in all its aggravations, would give vent to his indignation by destroying those who commit it.

On some occasions God has signally interposed to execute vengeance on sinners, [Numbers 16:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 16.31-32). [1 Corinthians 10:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.1-10). And it is a miracle of mercy that he endures any with such patience and forbearance. *When he sees both his mercies and his judgments despised, and that his endeavors to reclaim sinners issue in nothing but disappointment, we might well expect him to swear in his wrath, that such daring transgressors should never enter into his rest!*

But he determines rather to save them by an exertion of sovereign and almighty grace.

Jeremiah informs us, that, when God knew not, as it were, how to restore the backsliding Israelites, so as to put them among the number of his children, he adopted this resolution, "You shall call me, *my Father*, and shall not turn away from me, [Jeremiah 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.19)."

Thus in the passage before us he says, "I have seen his ways, and (what? will destroy him utterly? No!) will heal him." What marvelous condescension! What unbounded mercy! How should it melt the most obdurate heart! God will apply the balm of Gilead to the consciences of sinners, "he will heal their backslidings and love them freely." Nay, further, he will take them by the hand, and however far they may have strayed, he will bring them back unto his fold, and "lead" them in safety to his heavenly kingdom. Nor will he leave them destitute even of present "comforts;" the peace and happiness, which they have in vain sought for in the ways of sin. He will lead in the paths of righteousness und true holiness.

It is to be remembered, however, that he will first make them "mourn" for their transgressions.

While sinners continue obstinate, it is not possible that they should obtain favor with the Lord. God must altogether deny himself before he can receive the impenitent. He has declared that all must repent, or perish, [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 13.3); and that it is in a way of weeping and supplication that he will lead them to himself, [Jeremiah 31:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.9). It is the broken and contrite heart alone that he will not despise, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17). He says, "Only acknowledge your iniquity;" and when his time has come for subduing a sinner to the obedience of faith, he will "take away his stony heart, and give him a heart of flesh! [Ezekiel 36:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.26);" he will first "give him repentance; and then remission of sin [Acts 5:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.31)." He will cause him to become a mourner in Zion; and then will give him beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness! [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3).

***~~This subject may lead us to observe,~~***

***~~1. Of what importance it is to search out the hidden corruptions of our hearts!~~***

Covetousness is a sin of which scarcely any people acknowledge themselves to be guilty of. However much they are under the power of covetousness, they do not see any occasion for repentance before God, provided they are free from gross and scandalous sins.

But the predominance of that, or any other vile affection in the heart, may fill God with wrath against us, and cause him to "hide his face" from us forever, und to "smite" us with his heaviest judgments.

Should we not then be afraid of "speaking peace to ourselves, when there is no peace? [Jeremiah 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 6.14)."

Should we not beg of God to give us increasing views of those chambers of imagery, where ten thousand abominations lurk unseen? [Ezekiel 8:6-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 8.6-15).

Should we not with all diligence search our hearts, to find whether there be any way of wickedness allowed within us [Psalm 139:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 139.23-24). Let there be a holy jealousy in every bosom; and let the utmost care be used, lest we deceive ourselves to our eternal ruin.

***~~2. How necessary is it to notice the dealings of God towards us!~~***

If we meet with temporal afflictions, we should regard them as sent by God; and though they are tokens of love to his people—yet are they indications of wrath to his enemies; and, whether we are converted or not, they have a voice which it befits us to hear with attention and reverence! [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 6.9).

If we are visited with spiritual judgments, if God hides his face from us in the ordinances, and withholds the influences of his Spirit, we should still more earnestly inquire why God contends with us, [Job 10:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 10.2).

Perhaps we should find that God is "angry" on account of our pride, ambition, worldliness, or some other hateful lust; and that, as he would not hear the Jews even "when they made many prayers, because their hands were full of blood," so some cursed abomination has provoked him to withdraw from *us.*

If we perceive no particular trial, either temporal or spiritual, we must not even then conclude that all is well, since it is the very nature of spiritual judgments to blind the eyes, and sear the conscience, and harden the heart.

Of this we may be sure; that whether our outward circumstances are prosperous or adverse, they are equally calls and invitations from God; and are intended as incentives to gratitude and humiliation. Let us then both notice and improve his works of providence and grace; let us improve them by obeying him who calls, and "turning unto him who smites us."

***~~3. How thankfully should we accept the present offers of his mercy!~~***

Now, notwithstanding all our "frowardness," the voice of mercy sounds in our ears. But how vain will it be to wish for one such promise in the eternal world! God will *not*then say, "I will heal him;" but, "I have seen his ways, and will execute vengeance on him to the uttermost." *Now*God would "comfort us" if we turned to him with "mourning;" but *then*, though we weep and wail ever so much, he will not grant to us one glimpse of his favor, or the smallest possible mitigation of our pain.

Let us then entertain a grateful sense of his unspeakable kindness. Let us "turn to him with weeping and with mourning." Let us humble ourselves in the dust before him; and pray, that, where sin has abounded, his grace may much more abound! [Romans 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20).

***~~#991~~***

***~~NO PEACE TO THE WICKED~~***

**[Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.20-21)**

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked!"

We need not wait until a future life in order to discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked; it is plainly discoverable now in their conduct; nor is it less so in the inward frame of their minds. To a superficial observer indeed the wicked may seem to have the advantage; they being light and mirthful, while the righteous are often weary and heavy-laden; but God, who sees through the veil of outward appearances, affirms the very reverse of this to be true. We shall,

***~~I. Confirm this divine assertion.~~***

***~~There certainly is a kind of peace which the wicked may, and do, possess.~~***

By the "wicked" we are not necessarily to understand, those who are vicious and profane; but *all people who are not devoted to God in the habitual exercise of righteousness and true holiness*. And when it is said that such people have "no peace," we must not imagine that they have no comfort or satisfaction in earthly enjoyments; for they are full of life and vigor; they shake off what they call melancholy; they banish all thoughts of God, and indulge in conviviality and mirth, [Isaiah 5:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 5.11-12). And, as far as carnal gratifications can conduce to happiness, they are happy.

Neither must we suppose them wholly destitute of what they mistake for peace; they often persuade themselves of the safety of their state, and in a very confident manner assert their relation to God as his children, [John 8:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.39); [John 8:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.41). Having fixed the standard of duty according to their own mind; and finding that, for the most part, they attain to what they deem a sufficient measure of religion—they "speak peace unto themselves, when alas! there is no peace! [Jeremiah 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 6.14)."

***~~But of the peace of the gospel they are wholly ignorant.~~***

The peace, which our Lord gives to his faithful followers, and which he emphatically calls his peace, [John 14:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.27), is very different from anything which an unregenerate man has ever experienced. It consists in a well-grounded hope of acceptance through Christ;" and in "the testimony of our conscience" that we are walking agreeably to his mind and will. *This peace is not a blind persuasion contrary to all the declarations of God's Word—but a humble confidence founded upon the sacred oracles, and a joyful expectation that God will fulfill his gracious promises.*

Now such a peace as this, the wicked never feel; they do not seek it; they would not even accept it upon God's terms, because they would not submit to have their conduct regulated by his holy law; indeed they account the experience of it to be the height of enthusiasm, and suppose that they who profess to have attained it are actuated by pride, and blinded by delusion! Can it then be any wonder that such people should never enjoy this peace themselves?

The truth of this assertion will more clearly appear while we,

***~~II. Show the grounds and reasons of it.~~***

We need not look further than the text to find ample materials for confirming the declaration before us; for it asserts that the wicked are in a state absolutely incompatible with true peace. "Like the troubled sea they can never rest" by reason of,

***~~1. Depraved appetites.~~***

However eminent for piety men may be, it is certain they will find much occasion for sorrow on account of their inward depravity. But they strive to mortify their lusts; they resist them in their first rise; and pray to God for strength to subdue them.

Whereas the wicked, however moral they may outwardly appear, encourage the growth of their vile affections; instead of repressing inward impurity, they enjoy the company, they relish the conversation, they read the books, they frequent the amusements—which have a tendency to foster their corruptions. And though from prudential considerations they impose a restraint on their actions, they will harbor evil thoughts without resistance and without remorse. The same may be said respecting their worldliness, their ambition, and every other evil appetite. As the Apostle says of the impure, that they have "eyes full of adultery, and that they cannot cease from sin," so, whatever else is the predominant passion of their hearts, they cease not from the indulgence of it; but yield to it as far as they can consistently with the preservation of their character in the world. How then can they possess peace, whose hearts are so disturbed and defiled by their depraved affections?

***~~2. Ungoverned tempers.~~***

*There is indeed an astonishing difference in the natural tempers and dispositions of men, insomuch that one person, notwithstanding his genuine piety, shall have much to conflict with: while another shall feel comparatively but little temptation to transgress.*

Still however, the righteous will have peace, because they labor to bring their minds into subjection to Christ, and apply to the blood of Christ for pardon under every renewed failure. But the wicked have not peace, because they neither cry to the Lord to pardon their evil tempers, nor pray to him for grace to subdue them. Whatever their besetting sin is, they will fall into it as soon as ever a temptation occurs.

Is it pride? They will be inflamed at the smallest insult or opposition; and, like Haman, feel no comfort in life, because they are not treated with all the reverence they think is due to them, [Esther 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Esther 5.9); [Esther 5:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Esther 5.12-13).

Is it envy? They cannot endure to behold the success of a rival; but, like Saul, would be glad to hear that he were brought down, or even that he were dead! [1 Samuel 18:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 18.6-9); [1 Samuel 19:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 19.1).

Is it covetousness? They shall have no enjoyment of all that they possess, because they have sustained a loss; or been, like Ahab, disappointed in their hopes of attaining something whereon their heart was set! [1 Kings 21:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 21.1-4).

Is it malice and revenge? They shall sometimes be so inflamed by the very sight of their enemy, or even by the recollection of the injury they have sustained, that their very blood shall boil within them, and their rest day and night depart from them.

Now what room is there for peace in a bosom that is subject to such continual agitation; and which, like the sea, not only is disturbed by every wind, but the instant it is moved, "casts up nothing but mire and dirt?"

***~~3. An evil conscience.~~***

Much as they strive to shake off reflection about a future state, they cannot wholly dissipate their fears; in the midst of all their boasted confidence they have some secret misgivings; and if a sickness, which they expect to be fatal, comes upon them, they cannot help wishing that their life had been differently spent, and that they might be spared to obtain a better preparation for their appearance before God.

Sometimes indeed they do hold to their delusions to the last, and "God gives them over to believe a lie;" but, for the most part, they both live under the accusations of a guilty conscience, and die under a solemn suspense, a dreadful uncertainty about their eternal state. If at any time their minds are awakened to a sense of their true condition, they will tremble, like Belshazzar, when he saw the writing on the wall, [Daniel 5:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 5.5-6). Or like Felix. when Paul reasoned with him about righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, [Acts 24:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 24.25). Is it possible that peace should consist with such a state as this? Or do we need anything more to confirm the testimony of God respecting them, that they have no peace?

***~~This subject cannot fail of suggesting to us,~~***

***~~1. The bitterness of sin.~~***

Men live in sin under the idea that it will make them happy; but though they "roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue, it proves to be the very gall of asps within them! [Job 20:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 20.12-14)." Sin is that which robs us of all solid peace; it is that which renders us altogether incapable of peace, as long as it retains an ascendancy over us. We may appeal to the consciences of all who are indulging sin, whether in heart or act:

Have you peace? Do you know what it is to have "the love of God shed abroad in your hearts;" to have "the witness of his Spirit" testifying of your adoption into his family; and to look forward with pleasure to your appearance at his tribunal?

We are sure that no unregenerate man whatever can answer in the affirmative. And why not? Is it not on account of sin, sin indulged, sin unrepented of?

See what an accursed thing sin is, which robs you of all that is truly valuable of:  
peace in life,  
and hope in death,  
and happiness in eternity!

And will you yet harbor sin in your hearts? O flee from it as from the face of a deadly viper! Let it be the one labor of your lives to mortify and subdue it!

***~~2. The excellency of the Gospel.~~***

*As fatal as sin has proved to the present and everlasting welfare of millions, the gospel offers a full and sufficient remedy.* The words before the text are quoted by an inspired apostle in proof that Jesus is our peace, and that having made reconciliation for us through the blood of his cross, he preaches peace to those who are afar off, and to those who are near, verse 19 with [Ephesians 2:13-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.13-17). Blessed be God, there is efficacy in the blood of Jesus to heal the wounds which sin has made; if it is sprinkled on our hearts by faith, it will purge us from an evil conscience, and speak peace to our souls! [Hebrews 10:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.22); [Hebrews 12:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.24). Apply but that remedy, and you snail soon feel its transcendent worth and efficacy. "May the Lord of peace himself" reveal to you his truth, and "give you peace always by all means, [2 Thessalonians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 3.16)." May you be so "justified by faith as to have peace with God;" and may that "peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, [Philippians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.7)."

***~~#992~~***

***~~THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE~~***

**[Isaiah 58:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.1)**

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins!"

Certainly, one of God's richest mercies unto man has been the appointment of an order of men to be his ambassadors to a guilty world, and to beseech their fellow-sinners to be reconciled to him. The ungodly indeed have never appreciated this mercy aright; for, from the very beginning of the world, have the Prophets of the Most High been regarded as "the troublers of Israel"—fit objects for hatred and contempt. "Which of the prophets," says our blessed Lord, "have not your fathers persecuted?" But when a dispensation is committed to any man to declare the mind and will of God, woe will be unto him if he does not execute the office that has been assigned him.

The words which I have read will naturally lead me to set before you:

***~~I. The office of a minister.~~***

This is, "to show to men their transgressions and their sins." But it may be asked: What need is there for their services for such an end as this? Do not all of us know ourselves better than anyone else can know us? Can anyone be so well acquainted with the workings of my heart, or with the actions of my life, as I myself am? To this, however, I answer, that,

***~~1. The world at large stand in need of such faithful ministers.~~***

There is, in the generality of men, a thoughtlessness about their ways; so that they are altogether unconscious of having contracted any great guilt.

They never consider the requirements of God's Law.

They never refer their conduct to any other standard than public opinion.

They rest satisfied that all is right, so long as they do not violate the laws which the common consent of those around them have established for the regulation of their lives.

As for the *spirituality*of God's Law, they are utterly unacquainted with it; and consequently they never dream of their responsibility to God for anything beyond their overt acts. Or, if they think themselves accountable for their *motives*, they give themselves credit for meaning well, even where they are conscious of having acted sinfully. And *though their actions have not been altogether correct, they persuade themselves that their hearts are good*, and that their aberrations from the path of duty have been the result of chance rather than design, and of temptation rather than of any inveterate propensity to evil.

***~~2. Those also who are called "God's people," and who consider themselves as "the seed of Jacob," are not a whit less in need of instructors than the careless world.~~***

See the account given of those to whom the prophet was sent, "For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them! [Isaiah 58:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.2)."

Could such as these have any transgressions of which they needed to be informed, and any sins which endangered their souls? Yes, "their hearts were not right with God;" they were "partial in the law;" *they put their outward obedience in the place of vital godliness*; they trusted in their works also as recommending them to God, and as forming a justifying righteousness before him; and they even complained that God did not recompense them according to their deserts.

In the same way, how many such characters are found among us! How many, who, while they find pleasure in attending upon the House of God, imagine that, by their religious observances, they shall entitle themselves to his favor!

Now, in reference to all such characters, I must say, that the duty of ministers is to "show them their sins." It is their duty to search out, for the information of others, the mind and will of God; and to bring home to the consciences of all, a sense of their manifold transgressions. They must endeavor to hold up before men the looking-glass of God's Law, that they may see the deformity of their own fallen image, and be stirred up to seek reconciliation with their offended God. To every one must they point out the sins which most easily beset him; and declare to him the judgments which God, in his Word, has denounced against him!

While we assert this to be their duty, it will be proper for us to notice,

***~~II. The manner in which it must be discharged.~~***

The direction here given is clear and strong. Those who have received a commission to speak for God must deliver their message:

***~~1. With earnestness.~~***

Mere advice or friendly counsel is not that which befits them on such occasions as these, "they must cry aloud, and lift up their voice us a trumpet," if by any means they may awaken the drowsy consciences of those to whom they speak. Viewing themselves as ambassadors from God, they must speak with all authority, fearing the face of none; but declaring the truth, whether men will listen or not! They must show by the very manner in which they deliver their divine message, that it is a matter of life and death; and that the word they utter is "not the word of man, but indeed and in truth the Word of God!"

***~~2. With fidelity.~~***

They must "not spare," even though the offender is ever so great and powerful, or ever so dear and tenderly regarded. As John the Baptist reproved Herod, in whose hands his life was—so must ministers be faithful even to the mightiest upon earth. They must show no respect of persons, nor conceal anything which they are authorized to declare; but must be impartial in their reproofs, and make known "the whole counsel of God."

"Having received God's Word, they must speak it faithfully." They must be faithful:  
for God's sake, whose ambassadors they are;  
and for the people's sake*, whose eternal welfare is at stake*;  
and for their own sake, seeing that "if any perish through their lack of faithfulness, then the blood of all such people will be required at their hands!"

***~~Permit me now to discharge my office with respect to you.~~***

***~~1. To those who are altogether careless and indifferent.~~***

You may imagine that God takes no notice of your sins; but indeed they are all viewed by him with abhorrence, and recorded by him in the book of his remembrance, in order that they may be brought forth against you at the future judgment! It is true, that if you repent of them, they shall all be "blotted out, as a morning cloud." But if you remain impenitent, they will all be visited upon you, and sink you into everlasting perdition!

I have no wish to alarm you needlessly; but I must, at the peril of my own soul, declare the truth; and must say, that unless you repent, you shall all perish! But "if you repent, and turn from all your transgressions," I am authorized to declare, that "your iniquities shall not be your ruin."

***~~2. To those who account themselves to be the people of God.~~***

I ask not now, whether you are *self-righteous formalists*, or *hypocritical professors*. But, of whichever class you are, I must declare, that "God is not mocked; but whatever a man sows—that shall he also reap; he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

*Do not imagine that God will judge according to the estimate which you form of yourselves.* No! *He will take off the mask from the hypocrite*, and judge every man according to his works. Entreat him, then, to put "truth in your inward parts, and to make you altogether new creatures in Christ Jesus; so shall you be accepted in his beloved Son, and stand before him with boldness in the great day of his appearing!"

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." [2 Timothy 4:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.1-2)

***~~#993~~***

***~~THE SERVICES WHICH GOD REQUIRES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 58:5-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.5-11)~~***

KJV. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your re-reward. Then shall you call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon-day; and the Lord shall guide this continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not."

NIV. "Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."

*It is common for people who are hypocrites at heart, to make a great profession of religion, and even to complain of God himself, as not recompensing their zeal in his cause sufficiently.* The Pharisee who boasted of his fastings and his alms-deeds, is a just representation of this character. But against such people it is the duty of a minister to bear the most decided testimony. The injunction given to the prophet was, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins!" And what were the transgressions that were to be so severely censured? Was it an entire neglect of ordinances? No; it is acknowledged that the people abounded in the *externals*of religion, "They seek me early," says God, "and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." *But in the midst of all this pretended zeal for godliness, they were insincere at heart. Their observance of duties proceeded from a principle of pride, and was intended as a cloak for their hidden abominations. Their very "fasts" were nothing but a display of the vilest hypocrisy, which God abhorred.*The prophet, being commanded to reprobate such odious conduct, states to them what their fasts should be, in order to be accepted and approved by God.

In considering this statement we shall show,

***~~I. What, in their seasons of humiliation, was required of the Jews of old.~~***

They were called to express their contrition by fasting, [Joel 2:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 2.15-17). But the *outward service, however humble in appearance, was not acceptable to God, unless attended with suitable dispositions of mind, and amendment of life*. Hence the prophet appealed to the people themselves, that, to evince the sincerity of their devotions, there must be a change in their whole conduct, and a habitual practice of the long-neglected duties of justice and charity.

The Jews, both before and after the Babylonian captivity, were much addicted to extortion and oppression, [Jeremiah 34:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 34.9-11) with [Nehemiah 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 5.5). To make restitution to those whom they had defrauded, and reduced to bondage; to refrain from "pointing their finger" in a way of scorn and threat against those whom they had injured, or from deceiving them by "vain promises" of compensation; and to "break entirely every yoke," whereby they had galled and oppressed their brethren. These were the very first acts required to evince the sincerity of their repentance; since with the commission of such cruelties, not the smallest measure of real penitence could consist.

But to the reformation of these habits God required them to add the exercise of mercy. They must "feed the hungry and clothe the naked," and consider every man as a brother whom they should regard "as their own flesh;" they were to take the most destitute of the human race, and "bring him, if occasion so required, to their own house," for the purpose of affording him more effectual relief; they were to feel such sympathy with him, as to "draw out," not merely their purse, but even "their very souls," for his relief; and so to apportion their benevolence, as to aim at not merely comforting, but "satisfying his afflicted soul."

This is the spirit which God loves; this he approves infinitely beyond all outward services of whatever kind; and this he required of his people, as the best proof of a regenerate heart, and as the surest evidence of their love to him.

Such a change as this, he assured them, should bring down upon their souls the richest blessings.

They might have seasons of darkness and distress, even as others; or they might be calumniated by evil men, yes, and be harassed by cruel persecutions; but, if they abounded in the heavenly dispositions specified above, "their light should break forth as the morning, and their darkness be as the noonday; yes, their health would spring forth speedily;" and they would experience in their own souls far richer consolations than they ever did, or could, administer to their afflicted brethren, "their righteousness, which had been impeached, should go before them," to testify their real character; and "the glory of the Lord should be their reward," interposing between them and their persecutors, like the cloud and pillar of fire, for their effectual preservation and protection. Whatever they might need, they would have liberty of access to God for it; and upon their crying to him for it, he would present himself before them, saying, "Here I am; here I am; and whatever you lack I will give you."

Should they be in doubt how to act, "the Lord would guide them continually;" should they be in any particular necessity or distress, he would "satisfy their souls in drought, and even make fat their bones," insomuch that their graces should flourish "like a well-watered garden," and their consolations abound "like a spring of water whose waters fail not."

Now this leads me to show,

**II. What God requires of us at this time.**

There is a special call, both from God in his providence, and from the highest authorities in the realm, to humble ourselves at this time in fasting and prayer. But we must be careful not to think that a *mere outward service*will be of any avail, if we add not to it that *reformation of heart and life*which God calls for at our hands; I say then that,

***~~1. He requires of us the same duties as the Jews of old.~~***

We must put away from us everything that is contrary to love, and live in the habitual exercise of love in all its branches. There are many things, the offspring of pride and selfishness, sanctioned by the habits of the world, which we should be careful not to practice.

When addressing you on a day of national humiliation, I may well advert to that great national sin of holding thousands of our fellow-creatures in bondage, and treating them as though they had neither the rights nor feelings of humanity! While this continues, God cannot but have a controversy with us; nor can we expect anything at his hands but to be visited with his heaviest displeasure.

But there are manifold instances of oppression which obtain among ourselves in our daily interaction with mankind, which, though not of the same flagrant nature with the slave-trade, are most offensive in the sight of God; and against these we should, all of us individually, be on our guard; for God is the avenger of the injured party, whoever he may be, and will call us to account for all the evils that we inflict upon him.

But this is a small, a very small, part of the duty which we owe to our fellow mankind. We should regard our fellow-creature, however poor and destitute he may be, "as our own flesh," and be as anxious for the relief of his necessities, as we would for the ease and welfare of a member of our own body. *The extent to which our charity should be carried, should know no other bounds than the necessities of our brother, and our own ability to relieve him*. And such should be our delight in these exercises of love, that they should call forth all the finest feelings of our souls, and administer to ourselves a more exquisite joy than the communication of any benefits can confer on the receiver of them.

This is the proper employment of a season like this; and, without it, our external sacrifices will be no better than "the cutting off a dog's neck, or the offering of swine's blood! [Isaiah 1:10-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.10-17); [Isaiah 66:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.3)."

**2. He extends to us the same encouragements** **as the Jews of old.**

The Scriptures are clear on the subject of charity, as entailing on those who abound in it, a rich reward; and God even declares that he would esteem himself "unrighteous, [Hebrews 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.10)," if he omitted to recompense to us the benefits which for his sake we confer on others. True, our works of charity shall not go before us, to obtain the favor of God for the remission of our sins. Nothing but the blood of Christ can avail for that; nor can anything but his perfect righteousness imputed to us, form a justifying righteousness for us, even though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, or our bodies to be burned. But *our deeds of charity, if springing from faith in Christ, and love to his name, will follow us as evidences of the principle of saving grace within us, and as memorials of our desire to serve and honor God in his appointed way*. [Revelation 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.13)

But we need go no further than to the passage before us, to see what testimonies of his approbation God will grant to all who live in the exercise of love. Our acts may have been so private, that "our right hand has not known what our left hand has done;" but God himself will bear witness to us, and bring forth our works, not only as objects of his approbation, but as grounds on which he will proceed in apportioning the glory that shall be awarded to us, [Matthew 25:34-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.34-36).

At this *present*time also he will bestow such blessings as can scarcely be conceived. Take the different expressions in my text; analyze them; apply them to the soul in all their extent and amplitude; view them as suited to all the necessities that can possibly arise; and see God himself as pledged to carry them all into effect; and then regard them all but as a prelude to the glory that shall be awarded to us at the instant of our departure hence.

In a word, only enter fully into the promises here made to God's ancient people, and you will need nothing more to evince the excellence of love, and the blessedness of those who lay themselves out for God in the discharge of its high duties.

***~~See now,~~***

***~~1. How to turn to a good account the services of this day.~~***

Though the *outward*tokens of humiliation should not be neglected, *the inward rectification of the soul should be our chief aim*. We should "break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, [Daniel 4:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.27)." *To do justly and to love mercy are the chief things which God requires of us as proofs and evidences of our sincerity in humbling ourselves before him.*

If then we would spend an acceptable day unto the Lord, let us set ourselves earnestly to the work marked out for us by God himself, rectifying whatever we know to have been amiss in our conduct, and fulfilling to the uttermost every office of compassion and love.

*We must distinguish indeed between what we do in order to obtain acceptance with God, and what we do to please and honor him.*To obtain mercy at his hands, we must simply believe in Christ; but to glorify his name we must search out all possible occasions of doing good, and promote to the utmost of our ability the edification and happiness of all around us.

***~~2. How to obtain a very Heaven upon earth.~~***

Religious professors, when they enjoy but little comfort in their own souls, are apt to ascribe it to a sense of their own unworthiness, and to regard it rather as a proof of their humility. But in most instances, I believe, it must be traced to a habitual neglect, or a very partial performance, of the offices of love. The generality of men are too selfish in their habits, and too regardless of the necessities of their fellow-creatures, and the honor of their God.

We have seen in the passage before us what God would do for us, if we laid ourselves out for him in the duties and offices of love. He has told us that, "to water others, is the way to be ourselves watered," and to give liberally to others, is the way to have good measure poured into our own bosom. Let us then abound more and more in every good work; and we shall surely find, that "the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever! [Isaiah 32:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.17)."

***~~#994~~***

***~~OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH ENJOINED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 58:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.13-14)~~***

[Editor's note: We find Simeon's views of the *Sabbath* expressed in this section to be unbiblical, as there is no New Testament evidence that the Mosaic Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday.

"Unlike the other nine commandments in [Exodus 20:1-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 20.1-17), the Sabbath commandment seems to have been part of the "ceremonial laws" of the Mosaic covenant, like the dietary laws and the laws about sacrifices, all of which are no longer binding on New Covenant believers. See also [Galatians 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.10); [Colossians 2:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.16-17)." *ESV Study Bible*

KJV. "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, The holy of the Lord, Honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words; then shall you delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause them to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

NIV. "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken!"

That the observance of the Sabbath was intended to be of universal and perpetual obligation, does not admit of any reasonable doubt. It was enjoined to man in Paradise; and the commandment relating to it, when renewed to man at Mount Sinai, was, like all the other moral commandments, written by God himself on tablets of stone. The Jewish prophets spoke of it as to be continued under the Gospel dispensation. See [Isaiah 56:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.1); [Isaiah 56:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.4); [Isaiah 56:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 56.6); and the Apostles evidently continued the observance of it, transferring it only from the last day of the week to the first, in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and of the work of redemption which was thereby completed. See [John 20:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 20.19); [John 20:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 20.26). [Acts 20:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.7). [1 Corinthians 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 16.2). The *ceremonial*laws relating to it are abrogated; but the *moral*part of it is as much in force as ever.

In the passage before us we may see,

***~~I. In what light we should view the Sabbath.~~***

The estimation in which it should be held is here variously expressed.

***~~1. We must account the Sabbath as Holy.~~***

Whatever was consecrated to God under the law was accounted holy; it was separated from all profane or common use, and was employed solely for the ends and purposes for which it had been thus set apart. Thus the Sabbath, being consecrated to the especial service of God, is called in our text "God's holy day;" and, "The holy of the Lord." In the New Testament also it is called, "The Lord's day, [Revelation 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.10)." Hence it is obvious, that every part of it is to be regarded as the Lord's property, and to be improved for him alone. We should feel a veneration for it, precisely as we should for anything else that had been dedicated to the Lord; and, as we shudder at the impiety of Belshazzar in using, at a feast, the sacred vessels which he had taken from Jerusalem, though he himself was not a worshiper of Jehovah; much more must we, who acknowledge the sanctity of the Sabbath, shudder at the thought of alienating any portion of it from Him, to whom it exclusively belongs.

**2.** **We must account the Sabbath as Honorable.**

If any man, under the Law, had regarded the Temple, the sacrifices, and the vessels of the sanctuary, in no other light than as a common house, or common utensils, or common food—then he would have been considered as greatly dishonoring God. Thus the very sanctity of the Sabbath should render it "honorable" in our estimation; and we should labor to "honor it" by every possible expression of our regard.

***~~3. We must account the Sabbath as Delightful.~~***

The arrival of that day should be greeted by us with holy joy; we should say, "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." If we could suppose an angel sent down to this lower world to labor in some common occupation, and permitted every seventh day to return to his heavenly abodes, and spend that day in the employments suited to his taste, with what delight would he look forward to the stated returns of that day!

So should it be with us; and so it will be, in proportion as we have attained to the views and dispositions of those blessed spirits. Not that we should delight in it merely as a day of rest to the body, but as a day wherein God calls us, like Moses, to come up and commune with him on his holy mount; and, instead of abridging it, or complaining of it as long and wearisome, we should rather say, with Peter, "It is good for us to be here!" and should almost regret the arrival of the period when we must descend from the mount, to the less-pleasing occupations of time and sense.

But we will proceed to state more particularly,

**II. In what manner we should employ the Sabbath.**

In what manner we should not employ it, is here distinctly told to us.

Worldly business, and carnal pleasure, and unprofitable conversation, are all expressly prohibited! "We must not do our own ways, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words." On all the other days of the week we may find time for these things; but on the Sabbath-day they are to be excluded altogether. It is a grievous mistake to imagine, that after the public services of the day we are at liberty to engage in vain pursuits, invented only to waste the time, which otherwise would be a burden upon our hands. There are pursuits proper to the day; and in them exclusively should our time be occupied. We do not mean to say, that such things as can neither be anticipated nor postponed may not be done with innocence; for even under the Law, a latitude was allowed in relation to "what every man must eat, [Exodus 12:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 12.16)." In reference to such things as are really necessary, we are authorized to say, that "God will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" but it befits all to be on their guard, that they do not deceive their own souls; for God can easily distinguish the hidden motives of the heart; and will surely judge our actions as good or evil, according as their quality shall be found in his eyes.

If the infringement of the Sabbath is reluctant, as in the extinguishing of a fire, or in the exercise of compassion to man or beast—then it is well. But if we are actuated by considerations of ease, or interest, or pleasure, to alienate from God any of that time which ought to be consecrated to his service—then we may be assured that we must answer for it in the day of judgment.

***~~Our one aim on that day must be, to "honor God".~~***

The services which we are to render to our God on that day are various, and all are compatible with each other.

The first undoubtedly are private; we should give ourselves in a more peculiar manner to reading, to meditation, to prayer. On every day we should search the Scriptures, but more especially on that day; applying them to our own hearts, examining ourselves by them, and entreating God to make them effectual for the conversion and salvation of our souls.

From our closets we should go to worship God in public, and to testify before all, our regard for his authority, and our delight in his service. While engaged in the various offices of prayer, or hearing of the word, or of communicating at the table of the Lord—we should be particularly careful that the frame of our minds be suited to the employment in which we are engaged; lest, *while we profess to be serving God, we are found only mocking and insulting him by hypocritical professions*.

In the intervals, when we are disengaged from private or public duties, we may relieve our minds, and improve our time, in such as are of a social nature. The visiting of the sick, the comforting of the afflicted, the instructing of the rising generation, and, above all, the endeavoring to teach our children and servants, and to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"—are services well pleasing to God, and admirably suited to the sanctity of that holy day.

It is much to be feared that this latter duty in particular is sadly neglected, even in religious families; and that the great penchant that has been manifested by the religious world for public services, has brought into disuse those more self-denying offices which formerly occupied a considerable portion of the Sabbath-day. But, in whichever of these duties we are occupied, our great aim must be, to "honor God;" living as in his more immediate presence, and endeavoring to approve ourselves to him as faithful servants.

And shall the Sabbath, in this view of it, be accounted a day of gloom? No; we shall have far other opinions of it, if we consider,

***~~III. The benefits we may expect from a due observance of it.~~***

Whatever reference there may be in our text to the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, we cannot doubt but that the promises here made have a higher and more spiritual import.

***~~1. If we really keep the Sabbath as we ought, we shall be blessed with delight in God.~~***

There is nothing which God more delights to honor than a due observance of the Sabbath. We may perform the *outward*duties of that day, and reap no material benefit; but if we truly and earnestly endeavor to honor God in the way before described—then God will draw near to us, and reveal himself to us, and fill us with joy and peace in believing. We confidently make our appeal to all who have ever labored to spend a Sabbath to the Lord, whether they have not found such a measure of grace and peace flowing into their souls, as has abundantly recompensed their utmost exertions? Who must not acknowledge that one day thus spent in the courts and in the service of Jehovah, is better than a thousand passed among the vain delights of this world, [Psalm 84:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.4); [Psalm 84:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 84.10). And where the Sabbath is thus habitually honored, we will venture to say, that such happiness will at times flow into the soul, as David experienced, when he said, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while my mouth praises you with joyful lips! [Psalm 63:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.5)." Yes, "they shall be satisfied with the fatness of God's house; and he will make them drink of the river of his pleasures! [Psalm 36:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.8)."

***~~2. If we really keep the Sabbath as we ought, we shall be blessed with victory over our spiritual enemies.~~***

This seems to be the import of that expression, "I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth. Compare [Deuteronomy 32:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.13); [Deuteronomy 33:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 33.29);" and it shall be fulfilled to all who conscientiously improve their Sabbaths to the glory of their God.

*Too many of those who profess religion, are, it must be confessed, scarcely, if at all, advancing in the divine life; their evil dispositions still retain such an ascendant over them, as to make them go on heavily all their days.* But, if we were to inquire how they spent their Sabbaths, and what efforts they made to glorify God in their public, private, and social duties—we would soon find the reason of their slow progress. As our Lord said of some particular evil spirits, "These go not out, but by prayer and fasting," so we may say of the evils which are predominant in many professors of religion, 'They do not give way, because such slight efforts are made upon the Sabbath to subdue them.' If that day were truly and entirely devoted to the Lord, Satan would no longer retain the ungodly as his vassals, nor be able to exert so much influence over those who have professedly cast off his yoke.

***~~3. If we really keep the Sabbath as we ought, we shall be blessed with full possession of the heavenly Canaan.~~***

That land which was given to Jacob for his inheritance, was *typical*of the Canaan that is above, which truly "flows with milk and honey." And it may be safely affirmed, that no person who has conscientiously employed his Sabbaths here, ever did, or ever can, fall short of the heavenly rest.

Thousands who have perished by the hand of the public executioner, have traced their shame and misery to a neglect of the Sabbath. But never was an instance known of one who duly improved his Sabbaths being left to die under the dominion of his sins. Indeed the services of the Sabbath cannot possibly consist with indulged and willful sin. On the contrary, they are both a preparation for Heaven, and a foretaste of it.

***~~On earth the saints behold their God by faith; but in Heaven they will behold him face to face.~~***

On earth they, as it were, learn and rehearse their parts; but in Heaven they will join the full chorus of saints and angels in everlasting hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb!

***~~See hence,~~***

***~~1. How reasonable are the requirements of God in his Gospel!~~***

Had God required six days out of the seven to be spent in such exercises, it would have been highly reasonable that we should obey him; how much more when he gives us six for earthly business, and requires only one to be consecrated entirely unto him! If the services of that day were ever so painful, they might well be claimed by Him who has done such great things for us; and how much more when they are so delightful and so profitable! Grudge him not then that day, nor any portion of it; but let it be wholly and unreservedly devoted to his service.

***~~2. How just will be the condemnation of those who disobey the Sabbath commands!~~***

A person who has attained to fifty years of age, has had above seven years of Sabbaths. O what blessings might not have been secured in that time, if all those Sabbaths had been sanctified to the Lord! And what judgments does not he merit, who has wasted all of them in a willful neglect of God! Little as we think of Sabbaths now, we shall find before long, that the profaning of them has greatly increased our guilt and misery. May the Lord grant that this day may not pass away as so many others have done, unprofitably to our souls; but let it be to every one of us a preparation for our eternal rest!

***~~#995~~***

***~~NO PEACE IN THE WAY OF SIN~~***

**[Isaiah 59:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.8)**

"The way of peace they do not know;  
 there is no justice in their paths.  
 They have made crooked paths;  
 no one who walks in them will know peace!"

This chapter deserves especial notice, not merely on account of its historical import, but particularly on account of the use made of it by the Apostle Paul.

As written by the *prophet Isaiah*, it seems descriptive of some peculiarly abandoned characters, who committed all manner of iniquity.

But, as quoted by the *Apostle Paul*, it is descriptive of mankind in general, and marks the entire depravity of our fallen nature.

Now, in reading the Epistle to the Romans, we are apt to wonder how an inspired writer could deduce such a doctrine from passages which appear to afford so little foundation for it; for it seems strange to say, that because some pre-eminently wicked people, of one age and country, were guilty of the most flagrant sins—then all people, in all ages and countries, must have the same propensities.

But I do not hesitate to say, that the Apostle's inference is just; for, if any people enjoying the light of revelation were, notwithstanding all their advantages, so wicked—the fault was not in their accidental circumstances, but in their *nature*itself; and, consequently, all who possess the same nature must be partakers of the same propensities. And if they do not yield to those propensities in the same manner as others, they must owe it, not to any superior goodness of their own, but to *the preventing grace of God*.

It is not my intention to prosecute the subject before us to the extent that the Apostle's example would justify; I shall satisfy myself with exhibiting:

***~~I. The character here described.~~***

Of human *nature*, as born into the world, I forbear to speak; but of men's *actions*our text gives a just and universal description. We need not go back to the Jews—we need only to look among ourselves; and we shall find that all of us, without exception, while in our natural and unconverted state, are guilty of the crime here spoken of, "We make crooked paths." In proof of which, I will show you our deviations,

***~~1. We make crooked paths from the line of duty prescribed by the law.~~***

You need not be told, I trust, what the law of God requires; it requires that we "love God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and that we love our neighbor as ourselves." But who among us has obeyed it? who has obeyed it for anyone day or hour of his whole life? The truth is, that our whole life has been one continued scene of departure from it. Instead of loving God supremely—we have loved the creature above him, and have sought our happiness in it, rather than in him. Instead of loving our neighbors as ourselves, we have lived in one continued state of selfishness; preferring our own ease, honor, interest, to that of others; and, in many instances, seeking our own welfare at the expense of that of others.

But this matter admits of no doubt; we shall all readily acknowledge our deviations from the perfect law of God; and that, when tried by that standard, "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God!"

**2.** **We make crooked paths from the line of duty prescribed by the Gospel.**

The Gospel is given to us to remedy our departures from the law; and it prescribes "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." And how have we obeyed that? Have we mourned over our sins as it befits us? Have we, like the Publican, been so oppressed with a sense of our own unworthiness, that we have not ventured to look up to Heaven, but, with downcast eyes, have smitten on our bosoms, and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Have we also implored mercy in God's appointed way; pleading the merits of the Redeemer's blood, and seeking reconciliation solely through his sin-atoning sacrifice? And, under a full conviction of the insufficiency of every other help, have we lived altogether by faith in the Son of God;" and "determined to know nothing, and trust in nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified!"

Say, brethren, can you indeed appeal to God, that, from day to day, he witnesses your sighs and groans and tears, in your secret chamber, and sees you fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ, just as the manslayer fled from the pursuer of blood to the city of his refuge? Alas! Alas! If the truth is spoken, there have been in you as great and habitual deviations from the Gospel, as even from the law itself!

**3.** **We make crooked paths from the line of duty prescribed even by our own conscience.**

Every one has some line which he has prescribed to himself. Now it is not my intention to inquire how far the line of any man accords either with the law or with the Gospel. The point to ascertain is, how far your conduct has agreed with the dictates of your own conscience? You have seen no evil in many of those things which are practiced by the world at large; and it is not my intention to arraign your conduct in relation to anything which your own mind has approved. But the question is:

Have you not deviated, and very widely too, from the path which you yourselves have acknowledged to be right?

Have you not left undone much which you were persuaded it was your duty to do; and done many things which you knew to be wrong?

I again say, whatever latitude your own conscience has allowed you, have you not, in ten thousand instances, gone beyond it; and erred, both by *defect*and *excess*, from the very line which you have marked out for yourselves? I cannot doubt one moment what the testimony of your own consciences must be; and that you stand convicted, even in your own minds, of having "made crooked paths."

Having declared the habits of those spoken of in my text, I proceed to mark,

***~~II. The dreadful condition of their souls.~~***

Whoever walks in the paths before described, cannot know peace.

**1.** **He cannot know peace in life.**

I grant that those who are young and mirthful, and those who are prospering in the world—may enjoy something which they call peace; they may, for the most part, be free from anxieties and troubles in relation to their souls; and may go on in a round of pleasure without any material abatement, so as to account themselves, and be accounted by others, happy.

But this continues only while they are able to shake off all sense of *God's presence*, and all thought of *death*and *judgment*. Let but the thoughts of eternity rush into their minds, and there is an end of their gaiety at once; their mind is appalled; and they can find no relief, but in dissipating their unwelcome reflections, and drowning them in business or pleasure. *Their peace, even at the best, is only like that which is enjoyed by the brute creation*; it is not such as befits a rational and immortal being.

Scriptural peace consists in a state of reconciliation with God, and in the testimony of a good conscience. But how can this be possessed by one who is walking in crooked ways? It cannot be. As the prophet says, in the words before my text, "The way of peace they do not know;" yes, rather, when they reflect at all, "they are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked! [Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.20-21)."

And for the truth of this, I appeal to you, even to the most mirthful and thoughtless among you. Why are you so averse to think of death and judgment? Is it not that such reflections are a source of pain to you, rather than of holy delight and pleasure? Yes, if once you come to the light, your boasted satisfactions issue in nothing but fear and terror.

***~~2. He cannot know peace in death.~~***

Here again I must acknowledge, that many delude themselves with a persuasion of their own goodness; or of God's mercy, which prevents him from executing the judgments he has threatened; and by these vain conceits they are buoyed up with a kind of hope, which yet rises but little above a brutish insensibility.

As for looking up to God as a reconciled God and Father, and contemplating the blessedness of dwelling in his presence, they have no such thought; the utmost that they hope for, is a freedom from pain. They know not what it is to sprinkle their consciences with the blood of Christ, and to lay hold on the great and precious promises of the Gospel. They have no realizing views of Christ, as their Intercessor with God, or as their Forerunner who is gone to prepare a place for them in Heaven. These are the great constituents of scriptural peace; but of these things they know nothing. It is the upright soul alone whose end resembles this, "his end is peace," in the best and highest sense; but of this, the man who walks in paths of his own has no conception; and, if he is at all awakened to a sense of his condition, he has nothing but "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation" to consume him!

***~~3. In the eternal world.~~***

There is no peace for the wickedthe eternal world. No, truly, there is no peace for the wicked there!

At the instant of the departure of the soul from the body, all delusions vanish, and everything which God has spoken is fulfilled. Then how glad would the sinner be, if rocks or hills could fall upon him, and hide him from the face of his offended God and Judge!

But that cannot be—into the presence of his righteous Judge he must go; and from Him he must receive his eternal doom, even in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, prepared for the devil and his angels!

What peace can be possessed there, let the rich man inform you, who wanted a drop of water to cool his tongue!

Alas! "they rest not day nor night," but "drink incessantly of the cup of God's wrath and indignation!" To all eternity will they be occupied in "weeping and wailing, and gnashing their teeth."

Such will be the outcome of walking in the broad road which leads to destruction. Nor will any ever escape it, but those who "enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way that leads unto life."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. To those who are walking in the crooked way.~~***

Pause, I beg you, brethren, and consider where your feet are tending; for, whether you will believe it or not, those who walk in crooked paths shall never know peace.

But, having warned you of this, let me tell you how you may have peace. Blessed be God! there is peace to be obtained through the Lord Jesus Christ, "who is our Peace." Yes, "the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." Do you ask: How shall I obtain this? I answer: Come to him in penitence and faith; and "you shall surely find rest unto your souls." Let me propose to you the pattern which is to be realized by innumerable multitudes in the latter day, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble, [Jeremiah 31:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.9)." "Return to God" in this way, and then you may rest assured that your past iniquities shall not be your ruin. "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon! [Isaiah 55:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.6-7)."

***~~2. To those who are walking in the right way.~~***

*Who is it that has made you to differ?* You were once walking in crooked paths, even as others; but God, in his mercy, has stopped you, as he did the persecuting Saul, and "brought you into the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Let a sense of this mercy fill you with *thankfulness*to the Lord, and with "*compassion*to those who are yet ignorant and out of the way."

In particular, if a brother is drawn aside into any crooked path, be careful to "restore him in a spirit of meekness; considering yourselves, lest you also be tempted, [Galatians 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.1). [Hebrews 12:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.12-13)."

Also, you must never forget how liable you yourselves are to be drawn aside:  
"by the cunning craftiness of *men*,"  
or by "the wiles of *Satan*,"  
or by the power of your *indwelling corruptions!*[2 Peter 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.18).

To this you are exposed, even "after you have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and your last end may actually become worse than your beginning, [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.20)." And should you thus "depart from your righteousness, your righteousness wherein you have lived will no more be remembered; but in the sin which you commit you will die! [Ezekiel 33:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.18)." Of this you are most solemnly warned by the Prophet David, "As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel, [Psalm 125:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 125.5)."

Be much therefore in prayer to God, to "hold up your goings in his paths, that your footsteps do not slip." And never imagine for a moment, that you are beyond the danger of falling, "but let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls!" In order to this, take diligent heed to your ways; and be careful to "maintain a conscience void of offence towards both God and man." Do not despise little sins; for they will open the way for greater sins. In a word, let it be your constant endeavor to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in the world! [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15)." Then shall you possess the peace of God, which passes all understanding; and I also shall "rejoice, in that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain, [Philippians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.16)."

***~~#996~~***

***~~THE RIGHTEOUS, A PREY TO THE WICKED~~***

**[Isaiah 59:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.15)**

"He who departs from evil makes himself a prey."

It may sometimes appear unreasonable to take portions of Scripture which describe the state and character of the Jews in former days, and to apply them to ourselves at this day. But it must be remembered, that human nature is the same in all ages; and under the same circumstances will manifest the same sins.

This will account for Paul's mode of proving the total depravity of our nature, and the consequent impossibility of our being ever justified by the works of the law. He cites a great variety of passages from different parts of Scripture, which describe the state of the wicked Jews at different periods of their history; and those passages he uses to show how fallen our nature is. Some of the most humiliating parts of his description are taken from this very chapter, which confessedly portrays the character of the most abandoned Jews at a period of extreme degeneracy. Compare verses 7, 8 with [Romans 3:15-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.15-18).

An objector might say, This is not equitable; and I do not admit that the worst of the Jews in their most degenerate days are any just criterion for judging of human nature generally. But the Apostle might reply, that, if any people so highly favored as the Jews could attain to such heights of impiety as they assuredly did, the fault must be, not in the *circumstances*in which they were placed, but in *human nature*itself; which would manifest the same dispositions in others, if they were subjected to the same trials.

Hence, without hesitation, *I take the words of our text as containing a general truth, and as asserting a fact which will be found to exist in all ages and countries of the world*, "He who departs from evil makes himself a prey!"

It is my intention,

***~~I. To establish this fact.~~***

***~~This will be found true in all former ages.~~***

Go back to the days of Cain and Abel; and there you will find, that the very first man who was born of our fallen parents murdered his own brother, for no other reason than this, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous! [1 John 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.12)." Proceed downward through all successive periods of the world, and behold:

Noah derided for his belief in God's Word;  
Lot threatened for refusing to concur in the most horrible abominations that human nature could commit;  
Elijah deemed the troubler of Israel, because he withstood idolatry;  
and all the true prophets in succession reviled and persecuted by the people among whom they dwelt; as our Lord says, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?"

Every one of them might adopt the language of David, and say, "Those who render evil for good are against me, because I follow that which is good, [Psalm 38:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.20)."

If under any circumstances a holy person could escape persecution, we might well suppose that our blessed Lord would have escaped it; both because his whole life was employed in doing good to the bodies, as well as the souls, of men; and because his wisdom infinitely exceeded that of any other of mankind, seeing that "he spoke" on all occasions "as never any man spoke." But so far was he from being an exception to the general rule, that *he was an object of more inveterate hatred in proportion to the transcendent excellence of his character. There never existed upon earth one so spotless as he, nor one who was an object of such universal hatred and abhorrence!* [Isaiah 49:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.7).

His Apostles after him were all treated with the same kind of indignities, wherever they went; their converts also in every country experiencing the same lot; even as many of our own countrymen did at the time of the Reformation. There has in all places existed the same "enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15)," and the same opposition between "light and darkness, Christ and Belial, [2 Corinthians 6:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.14-15)."

***~~Nor is it less true at the present hour.~~***

The person "who departs from evil makes himself a prey" to all around him, and becomes, as it were, a legitimate object for every one to pursue with whatever degree of malignity he may see fit.

There is no other member of society, of a decent character, that is so universally hated and disdained. Every other person, if he do amiss, has someone to extenuate his fault; and, if he is treated, either in word or deed, with an undue measure of severity—he will have some to resent the injury, and to vindicate his cause.

But let a godly man be reviled, let his very *motives*have sentence passed upon them, let him be stigmatized with the most opprobrious names, and who will take his side? Who will vindicate his character? Who will show resentment on his account? If even a word of palliation is spoken in his behalf, it will be almost a miracle; but a real friend, who feels for him, who enters into his cause, who espouses his interests, he will not find in the whole world, unless it is one who is under the same condemnation with himself.

As it is said of our blessed Lord, "By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, *who considered*that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? [Isaiah 53:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.8)." So may it be said of all his followers; their *accusers*are bold enough; but their *defenders*are not to be found, even in the seasons of their greatest need.

Nor is it to one description of people only that the godly are liable; the rich and the poor, the moral and the immoral, are penetrated with the same hatred towards them, and manifest their hatred in the same unblushing manner!

Were Paul and Barnabas to be expelled from Antioch? No more willing instruments could be found than some "devout and honorable women, [Acts 17:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.3-4)."

Have Paul and Silas provoked the envy of the Jews at Thessalonica? There are plenty of "lewd fellows of the baser sort" ready to execute whatever their superiors may wish, and to drive these holy men from the place. Uproar and tumult being deemed the best answers to arguments which could not be controverted by rational discourse [Acts 13:50](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.50).

Only let Pilate and the chief priests pass sentence against Christ, and there will be no lack of common, people to spit in his face, and crucify him!

David, though so great and good a man, complains that all orders of men were actuated by the same malignant dispositions towards him, "the fat bulls of Bashan beset him, while dogs also compassed him round about! [Psalm 22:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.12); [Psalm 22:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 22.16)." Yes, "At my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered; they gathered together against me; wretches whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing; like profane mockers at a feast, they gnash at me with their teeth! [Psalm 35:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 35.15-16)."

That there are times and seasons of comparative peace to the Church we readily acknowledge; there were such seasons even in the primitive Church, [Acts 9:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.31). And we also thankfully acknowledge, that even where the same hatred of vital godliness exists, it does not manifest itself with the same degree of bitterness in all people; the natural enmity of the heart being moderated by opinions of liberality and candor.

But we will still say, that it does exist in the heart of every unconverted man, and that "those who are born after the flesh, will, though not in all cases with the same rancor, persecute those who are born after the Spirit!" As it was formerly, "so it is now [Galatians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.29);" and so it ever will be, as long as an unconverted man shall exist upon the face of the earth!

Having established this fact, I now come,

***~~II. To account for it.~~***

Certainly one should rather have expected that every one departing from evil, would be an object, not of hatred and censure, but of approbation and applause. We are constrained however to acknowledge, that this is not the case; but that, on the contrary, the person who takes this step will infallibly "make himself a prey." Fromwhence arises this? It is chiefly owing to these two things, namely:

***~~1. In departing from evil, the godly man irritates and incenses Satan.~~***

Satan is "the strong man armed, who delights to keep his goods in peace, [Luke 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21)." As being "the god of this world, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4)," he would have all his votaries obedient. But when one of his subjects revolts from him, and casts off his yoke, he instantly exerts himself to bring him back to his former state of vassalage and sin. For this end he puts in motion all his forces, both of men and devils—unnumbered myriads of whom he has at his command. Every species of evil schemes he uses, to accomplish his malignant ends.

If he judges *persuasion*to be the most likely means of attaining his object, he will find some friend or relative to whisper in our ear, "Friend, spare yourself." This, though in the Apostle Peter, was the devil's work! [Matthew 16:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.22-23). For, as he can transform himself into an angel of light, so can he make his ministers assume the garb of piety, and appear like ministers of righteousness! [2 Corinthians 11:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.13-15).

On the other hand, does Satan judge that *open violence*will be more conducive to his end? He will soon find:  
a Judas to *betray*us,  
a Pilate to *condemn*us,  
a populace to *crucify*us!

That, in the instance of our blessed Lord, was all accomplished by him; for it was "his hour, and *the power of darkness*, [John 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 13.27). [Luke 22:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 22.53)."

And, as then, so still, "he works in all the children of disobedience," and employs them in every possible way to maintain and extend his empire in the world! [Ephesians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.2).

This then, in part, accounts for the fact which we have before stated. It there is a deserter from a camp, no effort is left unattempted to bring him back to the standard which he has left; and much more may we expect that one so jealous of his power as Satan is, will exert himself to the uttermost, both by fraud and violence, to reduce to bondage those who have escaped from his dominion!

***~~2. In departing from evil, the godly man reproves and condemns the world.~~***

It is said of Noah, that, in building an ark for the saving of his house, "he condemned the world, [Hebrews 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.7)." In like manner, *all who depart from evil condemn those who continue in the way which they forsake. The very act of forsaking them is a practical condemnation of them*. But this the world will not endure; for *they feel themselves reduced to the alternatives of either condemning us, or acknowledging the folly of their own ways.*This latter they do not choose to do; and therefore, in self-defense, as it were, they adopt the former, and load us with defamation on account of our needless, or hypocritical preciseness. They will pretend indeed to cast the blame on our *principles*; but it is with the *practice*that they in reality are offended. If we would but conform to their habits, we might hold whatever principles we pleased, and no man would have fault with us; but if we venture to turn out of the broad road, and to walk in the narrow path which the Scriptures have marked out, we shall be sure enough to be comprehended under some sweeping term of reproach, which, while it purports to attack our principles, involves in indiscriminate censure of all, however opposite their principles, provided only they agree in their practice.

That this is the true ground of their enmity, appears from what our blessed Lord has said respecting the treatment shown to him, "The world," says he to his disciples, whose light was obscured by their proximity to him, "the world cannot hate you; but it hates me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil! [John 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.7)." So in whatever place we bear our testimony, the people who hate the light will wish to get rid of us, and will, in heart, if not in express terms, say to us as Amaziah did to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel" to molest and trouble us! [Amos 7:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 7.12-13).

***~~That this subject may be brought home to our own bosoms, permit me to address:~~***

***~~1. Those who through the fear of man are induced to continue in evil.~~***

It is certain that many, where the Gospel is preached with fidelity, are led into clearer views of their duty than they can prevail upon themselves to carry into effect; they are kept back by "the fear of man, which brings a snare." But let me ask: What is there that man can do, in comparison with what God will do, if we violate our conscience, and prove "rebellious against the light" which he has given to us, [Job 24:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 24.13). Hear the kind and tender admonition of our Lord, "I say unto you, my friends, Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear Him, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into Hell! Yes, I say unto you, Fear Him! [Luke 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 12.4-5)."

Think with yourselves, not only what a *folly*it is to fear man rather than God, but what base *ingratitude*it is to the Savior, who came down from Heaven for you, and died upon the cross for you, and bore all the curses of God's broken law for you. Did *he*then, for the joy that was set before him of saving your souls, endure the cross and despise the shame; and will *you*bear no cross, and encounter no shame for him? Should you not rather rejoice if you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake? Blush then for your ingratitude, and take up your cross, and glory in it, and "follow him outside the camp, bearing his reproach! [Hebrews 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.13)."

***~~2. Those who are called to suffer for their godly life.~~***

Shall I lament for you? No indeed! but rather commend you on the *honor*conferred upon you. How remarkable is that declaration of the Apostle to the Philippian Church, "To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to *believe*in him, but also to *suffer*for his sake! [Philippians 1:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.29)." Here he represents your sufferings as a gift from God—a gift of a most valuable kind bestowed upon you purely for Christ's sake—a gift greater far than faith itself; for if by *faith*you are saved, then by *sufferings*you have your weight of glory augmented to an indefinite extent.

Search the Scriptures throughout, and you will find but one testimony on this head; you are invariably taught to regard your sufferings, whatever they may be, as a ground of joy! [James 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.2); [James 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.11). You are told to "rejoice and leap for joy, seeing that your reward in Heaven will be proportionably great! [Matthew 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.12) and [1 Peter 4:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.12-14)."

See then that you faint not, either at the continuance or increase of your trials; but "be faithful unto death; and God will give you a crown of life!" Let your great concern be, to depart more and more from what is evil, and to abound more and more in that which is good. So shall you enjoy the testimony of a good conscience here, and receive the plaudit of your Judge in the realms of bliss!

***~~#997~~***

***~~THE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL VICTORY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 59:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.19)~~***

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

That there will be a time when all the nations of the earth shall be converted unto God, is attested by every part of Holy Writ. But the seasons of *great awakenings in the Church*have always been seasons of violent opposition from the great adversary of God and man; and while there remain any ungodly people to act as his instruments, he will not fail to make use of them, in obstructing to the uttermost the progress of true religion. It is a matter of consolation however, that the more strenuous his exertions are, the more will God himself put forth his power to maintain and advance his work; and we are well assured, that, "when he works none shall hinder him."

That the passage before us refers to the Millennial period is certain; because Paul cites it in that very view Compare verse 20 with [Romans 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.26). The words of the text indeed are somewhat differently translated by some, who apply the whole of it to God exerting himself "like a river straitened in its course, which a strong wind drives along." But in our translation there is a very important idea suggested, from which there is no need to depart. It leads us to consider,

***~~I. In what way the great adversary of souls assaults the Church.~~***

Never for one moment does Satan relax his vigilance, or feel any intermission of his enmity against the people of God. But there are particular seasons when his efforts are more violent, and when he may be said to "come in a like a flood." In the manner of his assaults indeed he is continually changing; but his object is invariably the same.

**1. Satan seeks to overwhelm the Church by errors.**

In this way he has often prevailed to an astonishing extent. Even in the apostolic age he had many active emissaries, whom he sent forth to disseminate error, and by whom he "subverted whole houses, [Titus 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.11)." It is scarcely credible to what a degree he "blinded the minds" of men in later ages, by the *superstitions of Popery*; and with what rapidity he established the heresies of Pelagius, Arius, and Socinius.

But we need not go back to former times; for we have witnessed in our own days the spread of infidelity like a deluge; we have seen a whole country, under the idea of superior illumination, setting up a false philosophy in the place of true religion, and establishing the *worship of Human Reason*on the ruins of Christianity.

If we of this nation have been preserved in a measure from the general contagion, still the errors that prevail among us are as general and fatal as any that were ever propagated in the world. The fundamentals of Christianity are kept out of sight; the doctrines of original sin, of salvation by faith, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit, are either wholly exploded, or received only in such a way as to reduce them to barren opinions, devoid of efficacy on the soul. Nor are the professors of godliness freed from the baneful influence of error. There are some who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and boast that they are freed from the law, not as a covenant only, but as a rule of life. This is but too pleasing to corrupt nature; no wonder therefore that such teachers draw away disciples after them, and that they cause many to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

**2. Satan seeks to overwhelm the Church by iniquity.**

At all times there will be found much impiety and profaneness in the world. But when a governor, or a minister lends himself to the propagation of wickedness, it will, like an impetuous torrent, bear down all before it, and inundate the land. Jeroboam no sooner enjoined the dereliction of God and his worship, and set up calves in Dan and Bethel, than all the ten tribes "willingly ran after his commandment, [Hosea 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 5.11);" and Peter no sooner sanctioned a cowardly shunning of the cross, than all the Church, not excepting Barnabas himself, were drawn away by his dissimulation, [Galatians 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 2.12-13). Indeed this is the natural effect of sin; wherever "iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold."

The difficulty of maintaining one's steadfastness must of necessity be much increased by a general prevalence of sin. How hard must *Noah*have found it to preserve himself unspotted in the midst of the antediluvian world; and *Lot*in Sodom; and *Micaiah*or *Elijah*in Israel, [1 Kings 19:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.10); [1 Kings 22:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 22.6); [1 Kings 22:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 22.13).

We are, alas! far more ready to follow a multitude in doing evil, than to put them to shame by a holy conduct; more ready to "put our light under a bushel," than to expose it to the blasts which threaten to extinguish it. Well has our Lord said, "Woe unto the world because of offences."

***~~3. Satan seeks to overwhelm the Church by persecution.~~***

This was the engine which Satan used from the beginning; he instigated the first-born of man to murder his own brother, for no other crime than his superior sanctity! [1 John 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.12). What effects were made in succeeding ages by Pharaoh to destroy the people of the Lord, is well known. The *Prophets*, the *Apostles*, and our *Lord*himself, were almost without exception persecuted unto death.

The Christian Church, from the first moment of its establishment to this present hour, has experienced the truth of that assertion, that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall*suffer persecution! See verse 15. And how many have been cast down by it! How many "bright stars have been swept away by the dragon's tail? [Revelation 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.4)."

*Paul*, when arraigned before Nero as a criminal, was left alone; all his followers forsook him; and he was left without any other countenance or support than what he received from the Lord himself, [2 Timothy 4:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 4.16-17).

Thus in every age, "those who have not had root in themselves, have endured but for a while, and in the time of persecution have fallen away! [Matthew 13:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.21)."

**4.** **Satan seeks to overwhelm the Church by** **temptation**.

Many who have withstood all other assaults, have fallen at last through the fiery darts of temptation! If we find here and there a *Joseph*or a *Daniel*who is enabled to defeat his enemy—we see *multitudes who, like David or Peter, are warnings to us, and as monuments of human weakness.* By the means that have been mentioned above, Satan assaults the Church at large; by *temptations*he attacks the individuals in particular. And who has passed this ordeal unhurt? Who has combated without a wound? Happy for us, if we have not been utterly cast down, and left to rise no more!

But that we may not be discouraged, let us consider,

***~~II. In what way the Spirit of God withstands him.~~***

"Our help is indeed laid upon One who is mighty." The Lord Almighty himself stands forth for our help; he erects his standard; and calls us to fight under it. He effectually defeats the attempts of our great adversary,

***~~1. By the preaching of his Gospel.~~***

With this apparently weak and inefficient weapon does he go forth to smite down his enemies, and subdue them to the obedience of faith. It is justly called "the rod of his strength." See what God wrought in one single hour by this sword in the hand of a poor fisherman; he reached the inmost souls of three thousand rebels, and rescued them out of the hands of their inveterate foe.

Wherever the doctrine of the cross was exhibited, it proved "mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds" of sin and Satan; and at this moment, though delivered in much weakness, it is "the power of God to the salvation of many souls".

***~~2. By the dealings of his providence.~~***

The dispensations of Providence, whether pleasing or afflictive, are all ordered for this end. His "goodness is intended to lead us to repentance;" and the day of adversity to bring us to consideration. Astonishing were his interpositions in *Egypt*, and at the *Red Sea*, and in the *wilderness*—for the purpose of preserving his Church and people.

If we were more observant of the various occurrences of life, we should often see that his hand has wrought gloriously on our behalf. As *David*, when almost surrounded by Saul's army, was rescued by the diversion caused by the invading army of the Philistines, [1 Samuel 23:26-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 23.26-28)—so have *we*experienced, on many occasions, God's seasonable interposition for "the deliverance of our souls, [Zechariah 1:18-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 1.18-21) and [Revelation 12:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.15-16)." "Whoever is wise, will observe these things; and he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, [Psalm 107:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.43)."

***~~3. By the influence of his grace.~~***

All other means, if unaccompanied with a divine agency on the soul, are of no effect; the richest mercies or the heaviest judgments serve only to harden the heart, and sear the conscience. The Gospel itself is rather "a savor of death unto death, than of life unto life," if it "does not come to us in power and in the Holy Spirit." But the most trivial event shall impress the mind, and the most cursory observation pierce like a barbed arrow, when directed by God "through the joints of the harness;" it is then "sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow!"

**This subject naturally suggests to us the improvement suited to it.**Hear then a word,

***~~1. Of warning.~~***

We may not have experienced, or strongly noticed, the assaults of Satan; but let us not therefore imagine that he is regardless of us; he is only watching his opportunity to strike with more effect. When he was defeated by our Lord, he retired; but it was only "for a season." In the garden of Gethsemane he redoubled his malignant efforts; and sooner or later he will make his assaults on us, however eminent we may be, or however careful to give him no advantage against us. Let us then "watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Let us "resist the devil; and he shall flee from us."

***~~2. Of direction.~~***

In the warfare which you are called to maintain with this great adversary, do not think to resist him in your own strength. Your strength is perfect weakness. Unsupported by your God, you will be crushed before the moth! You have not in yourselves a sufficiency for the smallest thing; much less to vanquish this "roaring lion." Lean not then, either to your own understanding, or to an arm of flesh—but let your trust be in God, who made Heaven and earth.

***~~3. Of encouragement.~~***

However numerous or potent your enemies may be, there are more for you, than against you! See [Psalm 93:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 93.3-4). "God has given you a banner, [Psalm 60:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 60.4);" yes, he himself is Your banner! [Exodus 17:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 17.15). Under him you shall conquer; yes, you shall be "more than conquerors through Him who loved you." Your extremity shall be the very season of his effectual interposition, "In the mount the Lord shall be seen." "Do not fear then; for though you are only a worm, you shall thresh the mountains." Even now may you triumph, in full assurance of victory. You may challenge all your enemies, and, like David, already pronounce Goliath's doom. See [Psalm 118:6-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 118.6-12). "Be strong then in the Lord, and in the power of his might," and you shall soon put your feet upon the necks of your vanquished enemies.

***~~#998~~***

***~~THE PERPETUITY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM~~***

***~~[Isaiah 59:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.20-21)~~***

KJV. "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord. As for me, this it my covenant with them, says the Lord; My Spirit that is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed, nor out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord, from henceforth and forever."

NIV. "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the LORD."

The manner in which the most glorious prophecies are introduced, is such as is *most effectually to display the sovereignty and goodness of God in the bestowment of the promised blessings*.

It will be generally found, that the sinfulness or misery of Israel is first set forth, with a considerable measure of enlargement, and then, for the most part, in an abrupt way; and, when nothing but a denunciation of wrath might reasonably be expected—a blessed promise is given, that a Redeemer shall be sent, to deliver Israel from all their guilt and from all their misery.

It is thus that the prophecy before us is introduced. In the whole preceding part of the chapter, the prophet expatiates upon the extreme wickedness of Israel, which the people themselves are constrained to acknowledge, verses 2-15. Then he expresses the astonishment of Jehovah himself, that, among all the people, there should be found none to intercede with him in their behalf, verse 16; together with his determination to arm himself in their behalf, and, by the exertion of his own Almighty arm, to gain for them the victory over all their enemies, verses 17-19. Then comes an explicit promise of a "Redeemer," who would not only establish his kingdom among them, but perpetuate his dominion over them to the remotest ages, verses 20, 21."

And here it is observable, that the temporal deliverance, which is generally used to shadow forth the blessings of the Gospel salvation, is lost sight of, and nothing is brought forward but what is completely and exclusively of spiritual import. The words before us declare, in very striking terms,

***~~I. The establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom.~~***

The Messiah is promised under the character of a "Redeemer".

To Cyrus and the Babylonish captivity there can be no proper reference; because the redemption from Babylon was given indiscriminately to all; whereas the redemption here spoken of, is limited to those alone who turn from their transgressions in Jacob. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is here spoken of; and the prophecy declares,

***~~1. His coming in the flesh, to redeem the world.~~***

Yes; from Heaven he comes, even from the bosom of the Father, to redeem mankind, both by price and by power:  
by price, even his own most precious blood, from the guilt of all their sins;  
by the power of his Almighty grace to deliver them from sin's dominion.

Yet it is "to those only who turn from their sins" that he comes with effect. It is to save men *from*their sins, not *in*them, that he is sent; and it is in reference to that very circumstance that the name Jesus, or Joshua, or Jah Osea, divine Savior, is given to him, [Matthew 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.21). But wherever he sees one who is willing to be delivered from transgression, he will work effectually in his behalf; he will allow no enemy to lead him captive; he will come to him as the angel did to Peter in prison; and will cause his chains to fall off, and the prison doors to open before him; and will thus bring him forth to light and liberty. He did this, in numberless instances, at the first establishment of his kingdom upon earth; and he has been doing it to the present hour; nor have all the powers of darkness been able to withstand him.

***~~2. His future coming, to unite in one glorious Church the whole world, both of Jews and Gentiles.~~***

Of the conversion of the *Gentiles*the prophet speaks in the words before the text, "They shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." And of the restoration of the *Jews*he speaks in the text itself. Of this we have no doubt; for the Apostle Paul, arguing expressly upon the subject of their future restoration, and showing that it is not only possible but certain, adduces this very passage in proof of his assertions, "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, [Romans 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.26)."

By a close comparison with the text with the words as cited by the Apostle, there will appear some remarkable points of difference; but they are such as may be easily accounted for, and such as have a remarkable propriety in them. The prophet says, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob." The Apostle says, "He shall come out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

The Redeemer, in coming to the Jewish Church, has already come to Zion; and when he shall hereafter convert the Jews to the faith, he will come out of the Christian Church for that purpose. Moreover, when he first came, it was to take out from among the Jewish people those who were willing to embrace him, and to turn from their transgressions; but when he shall come at a future period, it will be to make them willing; and, by the all-powerful operation of his grace, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

It would be sufficient to account for the difference, by saying, that the Apostle, as was customary with him, quoted from the Septuagint Translation; but when there was such a distinction observable between the former and the latter coming of the Redeemer, the adoption of the translation was peculiarly proper.

But, to the point. The Redeemer shall come again to convert and save God's ancient people, the Jews. As surely as ever he came to them in the flesh previous to their dispersion, he shall come to them by his Word and Spirit, to restore them from their dispersion, and to gather them into his Church, that they may again be a holy people unto the Lord.

And however deeply rooted they may appear to be in their prejudices and their sins, he will prevail over them, and unite them with the Gentiles in one great and universal Church, to be unto their God "a praise, and an honor, and a glory," to all eternity.

In addition to the *establishment*of the Redeemer's kingdom, the prophet announces to us,

***~~II. The perpetuity of the Redeemer's kingdom.~~***

***~~God, from the first establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom to the present hour, has accompanied his Word by the mighty operations of his Spirit.~~***

On the day of Pentecost this was manifest; for, not by the exercise of miraculous powers only, did the Spirit appear, but by the conversion of a multitude of souls to Christ. On all other occasions, too, the mighty working of the Spirit was seen, whenever the Apostles preached; and their "word was made living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword." So to the present hour has *the same divine energy accompanied the word, wherever it has been preached in sincerity and truth*. Thousands of living witnesses can attest, that they have themselves been enlightened, quickened, comforted by the word, through its having "come to them, not in word only," but "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Yes; to this hour is the Word "preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven;" not indeed in his miraculous powers, but in spiritual agency, which nothing can withstand.

**By the same almighty power, shall the Word be accompanied to the end of time.**

This is "God's covenant with his people." Never shall the preaching of the Word cease; nor shall the mighty working of the Spirit ever cease to operate by means of it. The Jews do indeed, at present, withstand the word; as all of us also do, until the Spirit comes to make the Word effectual. But this is only until the appointed period shall arrive for the Redeemer to extend his kingdom over the face of the earth. Then shall Pentecostal scenes be renewed throughout the world; then "shall a nation be born in a day;" then shall the whole Jewish people "look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn;" and "the two sticks of Israel and of Judah become one," "never to be separated any more, [Ezekiel 37:15-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.15-22).

*The perpetuity of Christ's dominion over them, through the continual agency of his Spirit*, is thus stated by the Prophet Ezekiel, "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD! [Ezekiel 39:25-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 39.25-29)."

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

***~~1. Consider this prophecy as a personal matter to your own souls.~~***

To you has this Redeemer come, even to apply to your souls all the blessings of redemption. Whatever you need, you will find it all in him, and you shall receive it out of his fullness. But, in truth, the root and summit of all blessings is, deliverance from sin; without this, Heaven itself would be no source of joy; nor would the work of Christ be of any real value.

Hear the testimony of the Apostle Peter, at the very first establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, "Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities! [Acts 3:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 3.26)." This is the blessing which Christianity brings to you; yes, to every one of you. Look back, and see what are the sins which have formerly led you captive. You once cherished them as conducive to your happiness; but far greater happiness awaits you in your deliverance from them.

Find your besetting sins;  
lay your hand upon them;  
carry them to the Lord;  
entreat him to wash them away by his own most precious blood.

Entreat, too, the aid of his Spirit. Beg that, while his Word points out and condemns sin, his Holy Spirit may make that "Word like fire, or like a hammer, that breaks the rock in pieces."

Once sanctified by the Word and Spirit of God, you will know the full blessings of redemption; they will flow into your souls like a river, and be a pledge of your blessedness in the eternal world.

***~~2. Consider this prophecy as a public concern, to the whole world.~~***

The Redeemer is come; his kingdom is established; his Word and Spirit evince an almighty energy, which nothing can withstand. Shall anyone then despond, in relation either to Jews or Gentiles? Wait but a little, and it shall be seen "whether God's Word shall stand or not." Look to the rising, or the setting sun; to the furthest extent of either shall "God's glory shine," and the Redeemer's kingdom be established. Shall it be thought that the obduracy of the Jews, or the superstition of the Gentiles—shall oppose any effectual bar to the Gospel? Before the Sun of Righteousness they shall vanish, like the morning dew; and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." When we think of the spiritual impotence of man, and feel discouragement from that, we forget that God has promised to accompany the Word with his Holy Spirit; for, if "the Spirit is poured out from on high," who is he who shall stand before him?

Go to the valley of Ezekiel's vision; see it "full of bones, dry, very dry;" at the breathing of the Spirit upon them, the Word is effectual to raise them into life, a whole army, [Ezekiel 37:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.10). So shall God's Word be in the mouths of those who shall go forth at the millennial period, "it shall be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of all the strongholds" of sin and Satan, and to "the subduing of the whole world to the obedience of faith."

Whether that period be yet fully come, we doubt; but that it is near at hand, we have no doubt. Let your *faith*, then, in this prophecy be strong; and your *desire*after this blessed period be ardent; and your *efforts*to hasten it forward, be energetic. Then may we hope that the Gospel, which has hitherto been confined within such narrow limits, will "run and be glorified," and that all "the kingdoms of the world will speedily become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ!"

***~~#999~~***

***~~OUR DUTY ARISING FROM THE COMING OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 60:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1)~~***

"Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."

The prophetic style is wonderfully sublime:  
its *figures*are so bold,  
its *transitions*so quick,  
its *descriptions*so animated  
—that all the most admired compositions of Greece and Rome sink in our estimation when compared with the sacred oracles!

The writings of *Isaiah*in particular justify this remark; and both the chapter, and the very words before us, are worthy of notice in this view.

The prophet had just foretold the coming of the Redeemer in [Isaiah 59:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 59.20). That the passage refers to Christ, and not merely to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, will be seen by comparing [Isaiah 9:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.2) with [Matthew 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 4.16); and instantly, passing over an interval of seven or eight hundred years, Isaiah sees his prediction, as it were, accomplished; and calls upon the Church, in terms of joyful commendation, to approve itself worthy of so great a blessing.

In discoursing on his Words we shall consider,

***~~I. The tidings here announced.~~***

***~~Christ is the fountain of light to the whole universe.~~***

He is "the Lord" Jehovah, "in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead." Though as the Son of man, he labored under all the sinless infirmities of our nature; yet, as the Son of God, he was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." From him proceeds a luster, as from the sun in the firmament; but though "he shines in the darkness, the darkness does not apprehend his light, [John 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.5)." It is the Church alone that truly receives him. The godless world, like Goshen in the midst of Egypt, is light, while all around it is in gross darkness, [Exodus 9:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 9.26); [Exodus 10:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 10.21-23).

If any have the Light of his Word, they cannot profit by it, unless their eyes are opened by his Spirit. Hence the prophet, speaking of him to the Church, says emphatically, "Your light is come."

***~~This light is risen upon the Church of God.~~***

Under the Jewish dispensation "the day began, as it were, to dawn; and in the hearts of some the day-star had arisen, [2 Peter 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.19)." But at the incarnation of Christ, and in the days of his ministration upon earth, the sun arose above the horizon. In the apostolic age it shone in its meridian splendor; and, through the goodness of God, it has at last visited these distant regions! [Malachi 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.2). [Luke 1:78-79](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.78-79).

In some respects it shines clearer upon us than even on the Apostles themselves; since they, for several years after our Lord's ascension, did not see that the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles was to be broken down; whereas we, who are Gentiles, not only know this truth, but are "engrafted on that stock, from which the Jews themselves have been broken off."

These tidings are indeed joyful; but, that they are to have a practical effect upon us, we see by,

***~~II. The exhortation grounded upon them.~~***

In the margin of our Bibles the Word "shine" is translated "be enlightened." This translation suggests so important a thought, a thought so naturally arising from the tidings announced, that we may well give it a distinguished place in this part of our subject. The exhortation may then be considered as two-fold:

**1. "Arise, and be enlightened".**

Notwithstanding "the true light now shines," the greater part even of the Christian world are covered with gross darkness, verse 2. We set before them the light, but they "love darkness rather than light," and desire that we would "make the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them, [John 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.19). [Isaiah 30:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.11)." But we should come forth from our dungeons, and behold the Sun of Righteousness! [Isaiah 49:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.9). We should beg of God to bring us "out of darkness into his marvelous light! [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)," and to "shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)." If we continue blind it is our own fault; we take part with Satan against Christ, and, as the recompense of our wickedness, "the god of this world is permitted to blind us, [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4)," and we are given over to a delusion to believe a lie! [2 Thessalonians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Thess 2.11). Since then "the day-spring from on high has visited us," let us no longer "sit in darkness and the shadow of death," but improve the mercies we enjoy, that "our feet may be guided into the way of peace."

***~~2. "Arise, and shine".~~***

The sun in the firmament irradiates the stars, which shine with a luster derived from him. Thus we are also to "shine as lights in the world, [Philippians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15)," and, to reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness. As the face of Moses, when come down from the mount, shone, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold him, 2 Corinthians 3:13—so should all of us, though with a less dazzling luster, shine in our proper orbit. The stars indeed can shine only when the sun is withdrawn; but the brighter the Lord Jesus shines, the more we shall reflect his image. Let us then "walk in the light as God is in the light, [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7);" and let "our path be as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day! [Proverbs 4:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 4.18).

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who, though living in the midst of the light, have never yet seen it.~~***

Such are without excuse. God would "make the scales to fall from our eyes," if we would but call upon him. But our rejection of the light will be the occasion of our more aggravated condemnation. "If Christ had not come and spoken unto us, we had not have had sin; but now we have no cloak for our sin, [John 9:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 9.41); [John 15:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.22)." Let us then cry to him, like those of old, "Lord, open my eyes!" Then shall we no longer walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life, [John 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 8.12). [Ephesians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.14).

***~~2. Those who, though they have had some views of Christ, are yet in darkness.~~***

The sun in the heavens is sometimes obscured by intervening clouds; thus also "the Sun of Righteousness" is sometimes veiled; and we are left to walk many days without any cheering views of his countenance. If this is the case with us, let us tarry his leisure, and wait patiently for his return. Let us not say, "My sun is set to rise no more;" but rather, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me, [Micah 7:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.7-9)." Thus in his light you shall see light, [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9), "the light that is sown for you shall in due time spring up, [Psalm 97:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 97.11);" yes, your light shall rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon-day, [Isaiah 58:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.10).

***~~3. Those who are enjoying the light of the Redeemer's countenance.~~***

Jesus is the light and glory, not of the church *militant*only, but also of the church *triumphant!* [Revelation 21:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.23-24). To "behold His glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, [John 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.14)"—is an anticipation and foretaste of Heaven itself. "In his favor is life; and his loving-kindness is better than life itself." Let the enjoyment then of so rich a mercy stir you up to glorify his name; so that, while you behold his glory, you yourselves may be changed into his image from glory to glory, [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18), and, by making your light to shine before men, may stir up others to glorify him also, [Matthew 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.16).

***~~#1000~~***

***~~MILLENNIAL PIETY DESCRIBED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)~~***

"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

There is much spoken in the Holy Scriptures respecting *the glory of the latter day*. This whole chapter is occupied with the subject. The predictions contained in it have never yet been verified. As great as was the spread of the Gospel in the apostolic age, it was nothing in comparison with that to which we are taught to look forward at a period that is now fast approaching. The prophet, while occupied in the contemplation of that day, saw it, as it were, already commenced, and the whole Gentile world flocking to Christ, even as doves to their windows.

The language in which he depicts that day is suited to the time at which he wrote. Jerusalem was then the center of union to all the tribes. There all the males went up thrice a year; there the sacrifices were offered; and there all Gentile proselytes also came to present their offerings to the Lord. But all these things were typical of the Christian Church, which shall be established on the face of the whole earth, and of the spiritual sacrifices which all who come up to our Zion shall offer there.

I propose to consider our text:

***~~I. In reference to the millennial period.~~***

The question is evidently the language of surprise and joy; and the answer to it is given in the whole context. Let us attend to:

***~~1. The prophet's own description of that day.~~***

Then light shall burst forth, almost as at the first creation, when "God said: Let there be light; and there was light." The gross darkness which at present covers the whole earth will be dispelled by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and "all flesh will see the salvation of God, [Luke 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 3.6)." "The Gentiles, from one end of the earth even to the other, will then come to Zion's light, and kings to the brightness of her rising;" and with them they will bring whatever they have whereby they may glorify their God; their whole land, as it were, being covered with their retinue. "See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD! verse 2-6."

The cattle shall feel, as it were, impressed with a holy zeal to honor God, and come up voluntarily, ambitious of the honor of being offered in sacrifice upon his altar. "All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple, verse 7."

All this Jehovah revealed to the prophet, and made to pass, as it were, before his eyes; assuring him, that the islands of western Europe should take the lead in this glorious work, "Surely the islands shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, (O that our happy island might have this distinguished honor, and employ her shipping in this glorious cause!) to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord your God, and to the Holy One of Israel; for he has glorified you! verse 9."

And in what manner shall this event take place? Shall it resemble anything that has ever yet existed in the world? No! It will infinitely surpass anything that occurred even in the apostolic age. Then indeed there was one day, the day of Pentecost, when God's power was revealed, and three thousand were converted to the faith of Christ; but at the period to which we are looking forward, "a nation will be born in a day! verse 22 with 66:8." A Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit will be a daily occurrence; and not in one place only, but in every part of the globe; so that the converts will come "flying" in inconceivable numbers, "like a cloud," and with the ardor and celerity of "doves flying to their windows."

Certainly this description of the Millennium is highly figurative; yet we conceive it to be fully justified by:

***~~2. The testimony of other prophets respecting it.~~***

All the prophets, with more or less clearness, testify of this day.

*David*speaks very fully and strongly respecting it. He tells us, "that the utmost ends of the earth are given to Christ for his possession, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8);" that "all kings shall fall down before him," and "all nations shall serve him, [Psalm 72:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.11);" and that "the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, [Psalm 72:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.19)."

The prophet *Daniel*repeatedly declares, that "the stone which has been cut out without hands shall break in pieces all the kingdoms of the earth, and become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth," and "stand forever, [Daniel 2:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.34-35); [Daniel 2:44](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.44);" and that "all people, nations, and languages, shall serve" our adorable Redeemer; and that "his dominion should never pass away, [Daniel 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 7.14)."

*Habakkuk*assures us, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall in that day cover the earth, as deeply and extensively as the waters cover the sea! [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14)."

*Zechariah*also, who delights to dwell on this glorious subject, asserts, that "the Lord shall be King over all the earth; that in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one;" and that "from that time there shall be no more Canaanite in the house of the Lord Almighty! [Zechariah 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.9); [Zechariah 14:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.21)."

Thus, without multiplying passages to the same effect, we see, beyond a doubt, that a blessed season is approaching, when God will, as it were, "create all things new! [Isaiah 65:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.17)," and there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, 2 Peter 3:13."

It will not be unprofitable to consider our text:

***~~II. In reference to the present time.~~***

***~~But here we must notice it rather with regret.~~***

Though so many centuries have elapsed since the delivery of this prophecy, we are, though not in time—yet in appearance, almost as far as ever from its accomplishment. There is not one sixth of the human race that have ever so much as heard of the Lord Jesus Christ; and of those who are called by his name, the great mass are as far from any spiritual knowledge of him as the heathen themselves! Look through Europe, or through our own highly-favored kingdom, or even through our own immediate neighborhood, and say: Whether you see, or hear of, anything resembling the description in our text? Where do we find:  
that ardent desire after God;  
that flocking of multitudes to Mount Zion;  
that surrender of themselves to God as living sacrifices;  
that determination to lose no time, but to press forward with increasing ardor, until they have found their rest in Christ?

Here and there an individual may be found that is inquiring the way to Zion; but what appearance is there of a cloud, borne forward by the breath of the Almighty; or of a flock winging their way to Zion, with a zeal that regards no obstacle, and a rapidity that allows no delay?

I may rather ask: Where is the place in which the great mass of the inhabitants would not regard such zeal as a wild enthusiasm that was to be repressed, rather than as a piety deserving imitation? Instead therefore of saying, Who are these? We must rather say, "Where are there *any*, who fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" If some there are; still, in comparison with the bulk of nominal Christians, they are but as "the gleanings of the olive tree, two or three upon the topmost bough."

***~~Yet we may also in some degree notice it with joy.~~***

I bless God that there are some, and some also in this place, who do seek their rest in Christ, and do fly towards it with unabated ardor. Yes, and with surprise also, as well as joy, may I ask, "Who are these?" They were once as far off from God as the camels of Midian and Ephah, and as unlikely to devote themselves to God as the flacks of Kedar, or the rams of Nebaioth. Their education, their age, their associates, their habits, all rendered such a change highly improbable; and give us a decisive evidence that *He who has wrought so effectually in them, can accomplish the same blessed change over the face of the whole earth*. We therefore do rejoice, both for the individuals whose zeal is so kindled, and for those who are provoked to emulation by the example that is set before them. And we pray God that their numbers may be increased a thousand-fold; and that in this place, as well as in the world at large, "a little one may become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. May the Lord hasten it in his time! verse 22."

**APPLICATION.**

***~~1. To those who have begun their flight.~~***

Let me say: Allow nothing to retard you, nothing to divert you from your purpose! If, instead of having a cloud, or a flock, to accompany you, you are but a solitary individual—then do not let that discourage you. Your object is not less praiseworthy on that account. *Lot*was not the less right in maintaining his love for piety, because all around him were confederate in evil courses. Nor was *Noah*the less approved of God, because the whole world agreed in loading him with derision.

If many will join you, be thankful for it; but, if there is not another in all the cities of the world that will flee with you to the mountain—then leave Sodom, and do not stop in all the plain. The judgments which are coming on every unbelieving soul, will amply vindicate your honor, while your personal safety will abundantly repay your toil.

Yet do not go alone, if you can by any means induce others to accompany you in your heavenly flight. Yes, be zealous and active in hastening forward the day that is spoken of in our text. Though the work itself is God's—yet it is to be accomplished by human means. If salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through him alone, he must be made known to the benighted heathen; for "how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher? [Romans 10:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.14)."

I thank God that means are now using by different societies to diffuse the Holy Scriptures throughout the world, and to send forth missionaries to instruct both Jews and Gentiles. Aid these societies then with all your power. It is particularly said in the verse following my text, that those who wait upon the Lord, "bring their silver and their gold with them." Do not let this be forgotten by you. Let your property be consecrated to this holy service; account this its best and most appropriate use; and, instead of giving grudgingly or of necessity to so good a work, regard it as *your highest honor to contribute even in the smallest degree to the salvation of your fellow-creatures, and to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth*.

***~~2. To those who have no such blessed object in view.~~***

What shall I say? I would take up a lamentation over them; and, in the language of surprise and grief, say, "Who are these who do notfly as a cloud, or as the doves to their windows?" What! Have they never heard what a Savior there is? Or are they ignorant how much they stand in need of mercy through him? Dear brethren, be persuaded that there is no refuge for you but in Jesus; to him you must come, if you would ever find rest unto your souls.

I beseech you, therefore, flee to him as your only hope; be in earnest; let not the doves flying to their windows outstrip you in your course. And bring to him all that you *are*, and all that you *have*. So shall the angels in the presence of God rejoice over you. So shall the Church of Christ also be edified through you. So shall you be fit for the Church above, where a whole cloud of witnesses are gone before you, and where you shall soon unite with them forever in the service of your God!

***~~#1001~~***

***~~EXCELLENCY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Isaiah 60:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.13)~~***

KJV. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto you; the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."

NIV. "The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together—to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet."

While we admire, as of necessity we must, the richness and diversity of the imagery which is employed to depict the beauty of the Christian Church, we must be careful to seize the truths which are so exhibited; for in this the sublime descriptions of the prophets differ materially from the poetic flights of other authors: they declare what actually exists; whereas the poetical representations of uninspired men are for the most part either mere fictions, or truth rendered fictitious by the high coloring that is given to it.

*The description here given of the glory of the latter day is exceedingly grand*. The whole creation, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate, contribute to it according to their different abilities. Not men only, but even flocks and herds, are spoken of as coming voluntarily to consecrate themselves to the Lord; and in my text, the woods of Lebanon yield their produce, to adorn the Church, and to glorify their God.

The particular expressions in my text lead me to set before you,

***~~I. The constitution of the Church of Christ.~~***

From Lebanon the wood was brought for the erection of Solomon's temple, [2 Chronicles 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 2.16); and all the glory of Lebanon shall be brought to our Zion also, to build a habitation for our incarnate God.

By "the fir-tree and the pine," I understand the great and mighty of the earth. While "the box tree" represents the poor and humble, whether in respect of civil rank, or intellectual capacity. Both the one and the other of these shall be employed as constituent parts of God's spiritual temple. For each a suitable place shall be found, and for each an appropriate use.

***~~The high and mighty shall be brought on a level with the lowest.~~***

Christianity does not at all interfere with distinctions in civil life; they are the appointment of God himself; and are necessary to the well-being of mankind. But in a *spiritual view*, the greatest monarch upon earth must be brought to a level with the lowest of his subjects. The axe must be laid to the root of all his pride and self-sufficiency, and he must be felled by the operation of the Word and Spirit of God.

Every man is a sinner before God.

Every man must be made to feel and acknowledge his guilt.

Every man must seek for mercy through the blood and righteousness of that Divine Savior who died for him.

Every man must live altogether in a state of dependence upon God, not merely as a God of *providence*, but especially as a God of *grace*; and must receive continually fresh supplies of grace and strength out of the fullness that is treasured up for him in Christ.

This is not the work of the poor only, but of the rich also; the most learned philosopher must in this respect feel himself on a par with the most illiterate of the human race. All must equally be taught of God; and all "be saved equally by grace through faith in Christ."

***~~The poor and lowly, on the contrary, are raised to an equality with the highest.~~***

There is not a blessing which the poorest may not obtain, to the full extent that it can be enjoyed by the rich and great. The Apostles themselves were not selected from the higher or more intelligent classes, but from the lowest walks of life. A few poor fishermen were raised up to be the teachers of the whole world. And if it is thought that this was a peculiar case, and that the poor by reason of their disadvantages are greatly inferior to the rich, I must say, that, for the most part, the very reverse of this is true; and that God yet daily, in ten thousand instances, "reveals to *babes*the things which he has hidden from the wise and prudent! [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25)."

The very circumstance of the poor having so little in this world lends them more simply to depend on God; and their conscious lack of human knowledge leads them to implore more humbly and more earnestly the teaching of God's Spirit; and hence by coming to God "hungry, they are filled with good things, while the rich are sent empty away! [Luke 1:53](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.53)." Thus does God still "take the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among the princes, [1 Samuel 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.8);" and it is still daily seen, that "the box tree" occupies a place in the Church of God which the loftiest cedar in Lebanon might envy.

That this is the constitution of the Church of Christ, is not left to be inferred from the figurative language of my text; it is expressly stated by James, who says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice, in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low, [James 1:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.9-10)." Here, I say, the whole of what I have asserted is stated plainly, and without a figure.

I now proceed to notice,

***~~II. The excellence of that constitution.~~***

In our text, this particular constitution is set forth,

***~~1. As ornamental to the Church itself.~~***

Let anyone view the Church as so constituted. Let the loftiest "firs and pines" be viewed in union with the humble "box tree;" the kings and princes of the earth assembled at the footstool of the Divine Majesty in concert with the lowliest classes of mankind; all there are bowing their knees together before their common Lord and Master.

The same *confessions*, however humiliating they may be, proceed equally from the lips of all.

The same *petitions*for grace, for mercy, for peace, for strength, are urged by all, with equal and united importunity.

The same devout *gratitude*is poured forth by all for blessings received.

The *Word*delivered to them all is pronounced with the same authority, and entire submission to it required from them all under the same solemn sanctions.

The same *invitations*and *promises*are held forth to all.

The same glorious *inheritance*assured to all who receive and obey the word.

View them all as then sitting down together at the table of the Lord, as guests equally invited; and equally accepted, by the great Master of the feast;  
all eating of the same bread;  
all drinking of the same cup;  
all receiving into their souls the same heavenly communications;  
all returning to their homes refreshed and strengthened for their future labors.

Say, is not this lovely? Is it not a very emblem of Heaven itself, where a poor Lazarus, whose very sores the dogs but lately licked, because he had not a friend to bind them up—now sits down with all the Prophets and Apostles of the Lord at the heavenly banquet, his head reclined in the very bosom of Abraham himself?

Yes! Thus it is in the Church below, "The rich and the poor meet together; and the Lord is the *Maker*of them all," the *Father*of them all, the *portion*of them all! [Proverbs 29:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 29.13).

Among them all, there is no room either for contempt or envy; the honor and the happiness of all being wholly independent of worldly circumstances, and wholly dependent only on the access to God which each obtains for himself, and the consequent manifestations of God's love which he is privileged to enjoy. Their degree of usefulness to the Church may indeed be affected by the situations which they severally occupy in civil life, and the qualifications with which they are endowed; but, as in the natural body, so in Christ's mystical body, though one member may have a higher office than another, none can dispense with the services of the rest, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor can the head say to the feet, I have no need of you." Every member has its proper place, and its proper office; and, if one were lacking, the whole body would be defective and deformed.

But in Christ's body not one member is lacking; every place is occupied; God having assigned to every member the situation adapted for it; and in the perfect adaptation of each to its proper ends, and the harmonious exercise of all for the general good, the beauty of the whole consists, See [1 Corinthians 12:12-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.12-22).

In truth, it is "for the beautifying of the place of God's sanctuary" that this assemblage of the high and low, "the pine and the box, is ordained; and we cannot but acknowledge, that in this view "Zion is beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth! [Psalm 48:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 48.1-2)."

***~~2. As honorable to God.~~***

To this point God himself calls our particular attention. "I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set pines in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together, so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it, [Isaiah 41:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.19-20)."

Now why, I would ask, does he lay such peculiar stress upon this, but because it reflects peculiar luster on his character, and displays in a most endearing point of view his glorious perfections.

Truly "this does make the place of his feet glorious;" because it shows, that, while he is "Lord of all, he is equally rich in mercy to all who call upon him, [Romans 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.12)." In his regards, there is no difference between one and another, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ, that is, the image of Christ upon the soul, is all, and in all [Colossians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.11)."

Let us suppose for a moment that there were the same kind of partiality in him as he complains of in many of his professing people, "Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? [James 2:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.2-4)." I say, let us suppose such a partiality in God; and how unamiable would he appear! But "there is no such respect of persons with him, [Acts 10:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.34);" the humblest shrub in all the woods of Lebanon is as dear to him as the loftiest cedar there; yes, the weaker they are in themselves, the more tenderly he watches over them for good, that he may "display in them the excellency of his own power, [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.7)," and "perfect his own strength in their weakness, [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9)." Even the least and lowest of them all he regards as "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; and in them he is, and will be, glorified, [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.3)."

In this then God acts altogether worthy of himself, and shows, that, as he is the *Maker*of all, so is he the *Father*, and the *Friend*of all.

**APPLICATION.**

Such being the constitution of the Church,

**1. Let us all seek to become members of** **the true Church.**

Are there here any of the higher classes? I would say, give yourselves to the Lord, to serve him with your whole hearts. This is what you must do, if ever you would be happy; for in the very words before my text you are told, that "the kingdom and nation that will not serve his Church shall perish." Do not imagine that your elevation among men can procure for you any exemption from your duty to God; *your distinctions only render your way to Heaven more difficult*. For people elevated in society to be humbled and brought upon a level with the poorest of mankind, is no easy matter; but it must be done; O beg of God to accomplish it for you, by the mighty working of his power!

To you who are of the lower classes I would say, Rejoice, that while your fellow-creatures perhaps are ready to despite you on account of the disadvantages under which you labor, God loves you, and made it a distinguishing feature of the Messiah's kingdom, that "the poor should have the Gospel preached to them! [Matthew 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.5)." Whatever the rich may imagine, you of the two are more favored of God than they; for while "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven," "God has chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom, [James 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 2.5)." Labor then to secure this privilege; and, though you have none of the external recommendations of "the pine and fir," you need not fear but that God will accept your services, and make you "pillars in his temple that shall go no more out, [Revelation 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.12)."

***~~2. Let us all endeavor to promote the establishment of the true Church in the world.~~***

As low as the state of the Church at present is, it shall one day, like the stone which Nebuchadnezzar saw, "become a mountain, and fill the whole earth, [Daniel 2:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 2.35)." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains; and all nations shall flow unto it, [Isaiah 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.2)." The stateliest trees shall then be as ambitious of contributing to its glory, as those of the humblest growth."

Let us then, in an assured prospect of that day, send forth workmen to Lebanon, to fell the lofty firs, and to bring in the humble box tree. So shall the sanctuary of God be enlarged and beautified, and his name be glorified throughout all the earth.

***~~#1002~~***

***~~THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF THE JEWISH CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 60:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.15-16)~~***

KJV. "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the bosom of kings; and you shall know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

NIV. "Although you have been forsaken and hated, with no one traveling through, I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations. You will drink the milk of nations and be nursed at royal breasts. Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob!"

The Church of God, previous to our Savior's first coming, looked forward to that event with eager expectation; and with the same holy feelings ought we to look forward to that coming of which the Scriptures so largely speak, when he shall take to him his great power, and establish his kingdom over the face of the whole earth. That such a period will arrive, there can be no doubt; and that it is fast approaching, seems clearly intimated in the prophetic writings. It is not necessary for us to fix the dates of prophecy with such accuracy as to mark the precise year when this great event shall commence, or be accomplished. An obscurity necessarily hangs over such predictions; it is not the design of God so entirely to make known the designs of his providence, as to put us into complete possession of them before they have occurred; but only so to reveal them, that, *when they shall have occurred, we may know them to have been foreordained by him, and to have fulfilled his eternal counsels*.

The chapter before us is altogether a description of that event. As for anything which took place at the return of the Jews from Babylon, or even in the apostolic age—it is altogether out of the question, as a fulfillment of this prophecy. It is agreed, on all hands, that the events here predicted remain to be accomplished. And what those events are, I will endeavor more fully to explain.

Let us consider then,

***~~I. To what these words refer.~~***

*Good men, especially in later ages, have been so fond of spiritualizing the Scriptures, that they have, in many instances, totally overlooked their primary meaning.*The chapter before us, for instance, they have applied to the Gentile Church, and have almost entirely lost sight of the Jews as comprehended in it. I cannot but think, that the grievous neglect of which the Christian Church has been guilty, in relation to the welfare of the Jews, is very greatly to be attributed to ministers themselves, who have either kept out of sight the prophecies altogether, or interpreted them in an erroneous way. The chapter before us relates to the Jews; nor can any person with an unprejudiced mind put any other sense upon it.

***~~Hear Paul's explanation of this chapter.~~***

To understand it aright, we must take into our view the two last verses of the preceding chapter, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord." To whom now do these words refer? Consult the Apostle, when citing them, in his Epistle to the Romans, [Romans 11:25-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25-28), "I would not have you ignorant of this mystery," says he, "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written. There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Does any doubt remain on the mind as to the Apostle's meaning? His next words will dispel it utterly, "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the Apostle understood the prophet as speaking altogether of the Jews.

**Examine the entire contents of the chapter.**

The chapter is a continuation of those words which the Apostle has cited and explained. [Isaiah 60:1-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1-17), "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. "Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD. All Kedar's flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple. Who are these that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests? Surely the islands look to me; in the lead are the ships of Tarshish, bringing your sons from afar, with their silver and gold, to the honor of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor. Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you. Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion. Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations—their kings led in triumphal procession. For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the pine, the fir and the cypress together, to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Then come the words of my text, "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated;" and so on.

Thus have I cited the whole preceding context, to show that *it is all one continued address to the Jewish Church*; and that, from beginning to end, there is not one syllable that can warrant the application of it to the Christian Church. You will observe, that the Jewish Church is spoken of in terms not at all applicable to the Christian Church; (for it is the Jewish, and not the Christian Church, of whom God says, "In my wrath I smote you; but in my favor have I had mercy on you." You will further notice, that throughout the whole of it, the Gentiles and their kings are contrasted with the Jewish Church, to which they minister. And all this is the rather to be noticed, in order that you may see how little ground there is for that perversion of the passage which they are guilty of, who pass over the Jewish Church, and apply the whole of it to the Gentiles; and at the same time, *that you may learn to read the Scriptures with an unbiased eye, and to expect the fulfillment of them according to their true import*.

Having ascertained the just application of the words before us, let us consider,

***~~II. The glorious prospects which they hold forth.~~***

The Jewish Church was forsaken and hated at the time of the Babylonish captivity; and still greater hatred and contempt has she endured since the degradation inflicted on her by the Romans. To have any connection with her is judged a reproach, throughout the whole world. See [Lamentations 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 2.15-16). Sadly descriptive of the treatment to which they have been, and still are, subjected even in the Christian world. But there is a time coming, when she shall be again honored, both by God and man; yes, "she shall be made an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

***~~1. She shall be honored in the number and dignity of her converts.~~***

Bold and beautiful are the figures here used by the prophet, for the purpose of describing this event. The whole Gentile world, together with their kings, are viewed as a nursing-mother, who administers to her infant offspring what God has given her for its support. In the first instance, they join the Jewish Church, as her children; but, having done this, they themselves assume the office of a parent, accounting all that they possess as valuable only in proportion as it may minister to the Church's welfare. This is more plainly declared in another chapter, where God says, "I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders; and kings shall be your nursing-fathers, and their queens your nursing-mothers, [Isaiah 49:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.22-23)."

Having already brought before you the whole chapter, I forbear to notice it again, any further than to say, that, while the accession of converts to the Jewish Church is there depicted in such vivid colors, that you see it, as it were, actually taking place before your eyes—it is particularly said, that "they bring their silver and their gold with them, verse 9," so anxious will every true convert be to advance the Church's welfare, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world. We must not however forget that God is honored in the conversion of the poor, as well as of the rich; of the lowest beggar, as well as of a monarch upon his throne. When the "glory of Lebanon shall come unto the Church," not only shall the noble "fir" or the majestic "pine" be seen, but the low and humble "box tree;" and equally shall they all, in their places, contribute to "beautify the place of God's sanctuary, and to make the place of his feet glorious, verse 13."

***~~2. She shall be honored in the special favor of our God.~~***

In former days, God had shown himself to be the Friend and Protector of his people—in Egypt, in the Wilderness, in Canaan, by numberless manifestations of his power and grace. And in days that are yet future, shall there be such evidence of his presence with them, as will leave no doubt on their minds, or in the minds of others, that "God is with them in truth;" for in the very next chapter it is said, "All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed, [Isaiah 61:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.9)." Nor need we look for miracles to establish this.

There is, in the very work of God upon the soul, abundant evidence that it is his work. This is well described by the prophet, in the words following my text, "Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron. Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones. I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your *walls*Salvation and your *gates*Praise, [Isaiah 60:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.17-18)."

Here, under the figure of temporal prosperity, such as obtained in Israel under the reign of Solomon, [2 Chronicles 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 9.20), is set forth the piety of Zion's converts; none exercising any more their corrupt propensities, or resting any longer in the possession of mere moral worth; but all exhibiting the brightest virtues, and abounding in the sublimest graces, "Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron. Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones." Such was the change wrought on the converts on the day of Pentecost; and who could be at a loss to find the Author of it? The creation itself does not more loudly proclaim its divine original, than this work does, wherever it is wrought; and to the person's own conscience it bears witness, "I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty one of Jacob!"

Let me now call your attention to,

***~~III. The interest which the whole world has in the accomplishment of the prophecies.~~***

***~~Look at the present state whether of the Jewish or Gentile world.~~***

Truly, *wherever we turn our eyes, we see nothing but sin and misery!*"All the foundations of the earth are out of course, [Psalm 82:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 82.5)." In private life, how little of God is seen! In communities, what "oppression, what violence, what wasting and destruction," fill the world! Say, Is there not a call for such a change as has been described? Methinks "the whole creation groans and travails in pain together," until it is accomplished! [Romans 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.22).

***~~Contemplate, on the other hand, the predicted change.~~***

Our prophet beautifully describes it in another place, "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea!

[Isaiah 11:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.6-9)."

This exactly accords with the representation which we have been considering. Peace and holiness will pervade the whole Church; yes, such peace will the Church enjoy, that it shall need no *walls*or *gates*for its protection, "her walls shall be salvation, and her gates be praise." With such a fullness of blessings, too, shall she be enriched, that no created comforts shall be wanted by her to administer their light; neither "sun nor moon" can add to her; for "the Lord himself will be a light unto her, and her God her glory." Nor shall this blessedness be transient, as in former days, "the Lord shall be to her an everlasting light; and the days of her mourning shall be ended."

At all former periods there have been sons of Belial to dishonor and afflict her; but in that day "her people shall be all righteous, even trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, in whom he shall be glorified."

Such a state of things, it may be said, is impossible; there being scarcely so much as an appearance of any such thing upon the earth. But that which is at present but "a little one, shall become a thousand; and a small one, a strong nation; Jehovah himself will effect it; the Lord shall hasten it in his time! Verses 19-22."

O, what a different world will this then be! Should we not pray for this happy time? Should we not labor to bring it forward? What exertions should we not make, if, perhaps, we may but collect a few of the stones with which this temple shall be built!

***~~Learn from hence,~~***

***~~1. What should be our own personal state before God.~~***

We see what the Church is to the whole world; such should we individually be, in our respective circles; an excellency and a joy to all who behold us; a source of good to all connected with us; objects of delight even to God himself. O brethren, let us not contemplate these things in the millennial Church, and forget that they should characterize the Church in all ages I We deceive ourselves grievously in this matter. We think that such and such things befit the primitive saints, but are unsuited to us; or that they will be proper for the millennial period, but are not so for the present hour. *Religion*is the same in every age; nay more, the assistances for attaining it are the same in every age. The Holy Spirit should be poured out upon us, if we sought his influences as we ought, "if we have not, it is because we ask not; or because we ask amiss." *Prayer*has the same power as ever; and, if we were instant in it, would prevail with God so to fill us out of his own fullness, that we might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God [Colossians 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 4.12)."

***~~2. What we should do for the benefit of the world.~~***

We should labor especially to extend the knowledge of Christ, which alone will prevail for the diffusion of holiness or happiness throughout the world. More particularly we should labor for the conversion of the Jews; seeing that they are God's appointed instruments for the conversion of the world. It is to their light that the Gentiles shall come; and "on their skirt that the Gentiles shall lay hold, saying, We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you of a truth."

Some are apt to imagine, that a zeal for the welfare of the Jewish people argues somewhat of indifference for the Gentiles. But, if we had no personal regard for the Jews at all—yet, for the Gentiles' sake, we should labor for their welfare; because it is through the Jews that salvation is to come to the whole Gentile world. Not that we are to set the two in opposition to each other; there is ample scope for exertion among them both; and we may hope to be partially useful to them both.

But the great period to which we are looking forward, when "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ," will be introduced by the conversion of the Jews, "the receiving of whom shall be as life from the dead, to the whole world! [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15)."

This, then, I say to you: Begin the work, which kings and queens are destined to carry on; draw forth, if I may so say, the bosom to them; and let all the affections of your souls be deeply engaged in administering to Their needs. Bring, as the converts of the latter day will do, "your silver and your gold with you;" and know that you can never expend it more beneficially to the world, or more honorably to your God, than by promoting that good work, of which the prophets have so largely spoken, and for the ultimate attainment of which the Savior himself poured forth his soul unto death.

***~~#1003~~***

***~~THE CHURCH'S PROSPERITY~~***

***~~[Isaiah 60:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19-20)~~***

KJV. "The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you; but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

NIV. "The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end."

*As there are many passages in the prophets which admit of a mystical meaning, as well as literal meaning; so there are many which must be interpreted altogether in a mystical sense.* There was nothing in the state of the Jews after their return from Babylon that could in any wise be called an accomplishment of the chapter before us. The whole passage can relate to nothing but the future prosperity of the Christian church. There is a time coming when the Church shall exchange its despised, impoverished, persecuted state for a state of felicity and honor; when its spiritual blessings in particular shall be both permanent and abundant, as a pledge of that infinite and everlasting happiness which its members shall enjoy in the eternal world.

***~~I. The text may be understood as referring to the millennial period.~~***

The terms here used, import that the prosperity of the Church shall one day be:

***~~1. Exalted in its degree.~~***

The shining of the sun and moon may well be understood as expressing the greatest temporal happiness. But we are not to suppose that there will be a total privation of temporal blessings from the Church; (on the contrary, there is reason to expect that its prosperity, in respect of outward things, will be greatly increased.) The positive declarations must here, as in many other passages, be understood in a *comparative sense*, [Hosea 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.6), and as implying, that the spiritual state of the Church will be so exalted as altogether to eclipse the greatest of earthly comforts; they shall be lost as it were, in the enjoyment which the saints shall have of God. This is beautifully represented us though the sun and moon hid their heads through shame, [Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23); and it is even now realized in the experience of those who enjoy much of the light of God's countenance. What "glorying in God" there will be in that day we may conceive, if we only suppose every member of the Church adopting the opinions and language of "the sweet singer of Israel, [Psalm 145:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.1-12)."

***~~2. Lasting in its duration.~~***

As the shining of the sun and moon imports prosperity, so does the withdrawing of their light imply the heaviest calamities. We do not suppose that the Church will have no mixture of bitterness in her cup; but, as, by means of her intimate communion with God, her earthly joys will be no joys, so, by the same means, her earthly sorrows will be no sorrows; they will be all forgotten, as it were, in the abundance of her exalted happiness.

This effect has often arisen from fellowship with God; Paul and Silas, notwithstanding their backs were torn with scourges, and their feet were fastened in the stocks, sang praises to God at midnight, [Acts 16:23-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 16.23-25); and many, far inferior to them in gifts, have also been enabled to "glory in tribulation." How much more then shall this be the case when God shall take to him his great power, and reign on earth, and the graces of all his people be proportionably increased! Surely "their days of mourning shall be ended;" or, if a cloud occasionally intervenea for a moment, their sun shall never set, their moon shall never be withdrawn; yes, the very clouds themselves shall only occasion the light to burst forth again with greater splendor, [Isaiah 60:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.20).

The text however will not receive its full accomplishment until we come to the eternal state.

***~~II. The text may be understood as referring to the eternal state.~~***

Then the figurative expressions in the text will fall short of, as much as now they seem to exceed, the truth.

***~~1. The happiness of the Church, shall then be in God alone.~~***

There will be no room for carnal enjoyments in Heaven; there "they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God." While we are on earth, God communicates much happiness to us by means of his creatures; but in Heaven we shall no more drink water from such polluted cisterns, but go to the fountain-head itself! [Revelation 21:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.23); [Revelation 22:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.5). "They have no need of the sun," etc. There we shall "see him face to face," and behold all the brightness of his glory. *There all the mysteries of his love will be opened to us, and its incomprehensible heights and depths be made plain to our shallow capacities*. O what shouts of praise shall we then utter! What glorying in God shall we then express! [Revelation 5:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.12-13).

**2.** **The happiness of the Church, shall then be in God continually.**

*Here*on earth the very necessities of our nature required an intermission of our joy; the body itself needed to be recruited with intervals of rest; but *there*we shall "not rest day nor night." Our days of mourning will be so entirely ended, that we shall never have our light obscured for one single moment. There will be nothing from without to trouble and perplex us; nothing from within to furnish matter of distress. Compare [Isaiah 49:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.10) with [Revelation 7:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.15-17); [Revelation 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.4).

We shall bask in the unclouded beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and *enjoy one eternal day*. Then not only our carnal, but even our spiritual, joys that we tasted below, will appear as nothing. As glorious as the present state of believers is, it has no glory by reason of that which excels, [2 Corinthians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.10). *Here*on earth our best frames have an alloy of sorrow, and are of short continuance; but *there*our happiness will be without mixture, intermission, or end!

***~~This subject cannot fail of suggesting such reflections as follow:~~***

***~~1. How evidently is true religion a source of happiness!~~***

It is foolishness that men should asperse religion as a source of melancholy. What if men's sins, or mistakes, or bodily infirmities make them melancholy; is this to be imputed to religion? Is Reason to be decried because all people do not exercise it as they ought; or the sun in the firmament to be abhorred, because all do not make a just improvement of its light? If those who despise religion would seek to attain it in their hearts, they would soon find that all creature-comforts are, in comparison with it, but as the candle before the meridian sun.

As for the benefits arising from true religion in the eternal world, we forbear to mention them; for if piety will not make men happier, even in this present state, than anything else can do, we will be content that it shall be utterly abandoned. But we have no fears on this head; and the very people that deride it, know, that they envy in their hearts the happiness of the saints. *O that all would seek their happiness in God, in God supremely, and in God alone!*

***~~2. What a different world will this be, when the promised period shall arrive!~~***

So eminent and universal will the piety of mankind then be, that it will appear as if all the holy martyrs were risen from the dead, and brought to live again on earth; and as though Christ himself were come down again from Heaven to reign visibly in the midst of them, [Revelation 20:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.4). Instead of such a general neglect of God as now prevails, a supreme regard to him will universally prevail, and a holy glorying in him be heard on every side. Surely the saints will then enjoy a Heaven upon earth.

Nor do we apprehend this period to be very distant. O that God would hasten it! O that we could see the dawn of that glorious day! But, if it is not permitted to us to see it, let us hope that we shall be still better employed, and be reaping the full harvest of what they will gather only the first-fruits.

Let us in the mean time set our affections on things above, and, in reply to that question, Who will show us any good? let us be ever ready to answer with the Psalmist, "Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety!" [Psalm 4:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 4.6-8)

***~~#1004~~***

***~~CHRIST'S COMMISSION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 61:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-3)~~***

KJV. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mount in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

NIV. "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor."

As important as these words evidently are on account of the blessed truths contained in them, they come recommended to us with double force, from their having been made the subject of our Lord's first discourse after his entrance on his prophetic office. The interpretation of them, which he has suggested, leaves us no doubt respecting the propriety of applying them to him, [Luke 4:17-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.17-22). While therefore we "begin at this Scripture, and preach unto you Jesus," we may truly say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears!" May the rehearsal of it excite among us, not merely a transient admiration, but a deep and permanent desire to enjoy the blessings revealed in it. The prophet, speaking of the Messiah, declares,

***~~I. Christ's call to his office.~~***

***~~Our Lord was consecrated to his prophetic office by a visible unction of the Holy Spirit.~~***

As the *priests*and *kings*were separated to their respective offices by pouring oil upon their heads, so, on some occasions, were the *prophets*also, [1 Kings 19:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 19.16). Our Lord, who, in all his offices, infinitely excelled all who had gone before him, was consecrated by an anointing, of which the anointing oil was but a type and shadow. "The Spirit of the Lord God" was poured out upon him at the time of his baptism; and the descent of the Spirit in a visible shape, like a dove, upon him, marked him as divinely commissioned to execute the work and office of the Messiah, [John 1:32-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.32-34). Indeed, he was called *Messiah* and *Christ*, from that very circumstance of his being "anointed with the oil of gladness above all that ever had partaken" of that heavenly gift. [Hebrews 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.9) with [Psalm 45:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.7).

***~~By that unction too, he was qualified for the discharge of the office committed to him.~~***

Though, as *God*, our Savior was incapable of improvement—yet, as *man*, "he grew in wisdom as he grew in stature," and needed to be furnished with those gifts and graces, which were proper for the discharge of his mediatorial office. Accordingly we read, that the "Spirit was given to him, not by measure," as to other prophets, but in all his fullness, [John 3:34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.34); and that the Spirit rested on Jesus as a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and of might, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, [Isaiah 11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.2-3). Thus was he both called and qualified at the same time; for though he was destined for his work from eternity, and prepared for it from his first conception in the virgin's womb—yet were not his qualifications completed until the great seal of Heaven was affixed to his commission, and he was openly consecrated to the service of God.

The prophet proceeds to open at large,

***~~II. The commission given to Christ.~~***

The terms in which his commission are expressed, have especial reference to the jubilees that were proclaimed every fiftieth year. He was sent,

***~~1. To offer salvation to all who needed it.~~***

At the time of jubilee all who had by any means been reduced to sell their estates, and to surrender up themselves and families as slaves to their creditors, were liberated from their bondage, and restored to the full possession of their inheritance, the very instant the trumpet sounded, [Leviticus 25:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 25.10); [Leviticus 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 25.41).

The Gospel is that trumpet, and it proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;" and our Lord's office was to sound this trumpet, to announce these glad tidings, to declare that this acceptable year was arrived, and that the "day" was come wherein God would take "vengeance" on all their enemies and oppressors.

These are glad tidings indeed to those who are sensible of their bondage to sin and Satan, and who know that they have sold the inheritance of Heaven for the pleasures of sin; but to those who are unconscious of their guilt and misery, the sound of the trumpet seems an empty noise, or rather, an insult, as implying a state of degradation, which they do not feel and will not acknowledge.

Hence our Lord's commission, though extending to all, was more particularly to "the meek;" for it is to them only, who are humbled under their wretched condition, that the offer of a free salvation contains any welcome news.

***~~2. To impart salvation to all who desired it.~~***

To "the broken hearted, and the mourners in Zion" he came to "appoint" and to "give" the blessings they desired. He was expected as "the consolation of Israel;" and, in that character, he particularly appeared. Were any bowed down with "a spirit of heaviness," and "mourning in" dust and "ashes?" He came to "bind up their broken hearts," and to exhilarate their souls; that they might be comforted, and become as people anointed with oil, and arrayed in mirthful apparel for some great festivity. There is in the original a word which cannot be expressed in a translation; he will give "beauty for ashes." We may conceive the feelings of a man who in one instant has been restored, from the lowest degree of servitude and want—to affluence and honor; but we must experience the blessedness of salvation, before we can form any adequate idea of the joy and gladness which Christ infuses into the contrite and believing soul.

Thus far our Lord himself applied the passage; but the prophet adds,

***~~III. The ends for which Christ executes this commission.~~***

Our Lord in every part of his work connected two great ends:

***~~1. The benefit of man.~~***

Though "once we were planted a noble vine, we have become the degenerate plants of a strange vine; and instead of producing good fruit, we bring forth nothing but grapes of Sodom, and clusters of Gomorrah! [Jeremiah 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.21). [Deuteronomy 32:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.32)." But Christ desires to rectify our fallen nature, and to make us "trees of righteousness;" that, "instead of the thorn-bush may come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, [Isaiah 55:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.13)," so that we may be as trees "planted and watered by the hand of God." This was the end of his mission; and it is invariably the effect of his ministration.

Let us only view the converts on the day of Pentecost, and in them we shall behold a just specimen of the effects produced by the preached Gospel; and, to whoever the Word of Christ comes with power, the same blessings are given; they are transplanted from the wilderness into the garden of the Lord, and "they have their fruit unto holiness, and their end everlasting life."

***~~2. The glory of God.~~***

This could not but be the great end which Jesus ever had in view; he had sinned if there had been any consideration in his mind superior or even comparable to this. And how well was his commission calculated to promote it!

View him as undertaking our cause, and coming from Heaven to redeem us; can we fail of admiring the love and condescension of that God who sent him?

Hear the tidings he proclaims; a full, a free, an everlasting salvation to perishing sinners. Are we not filled with wonder at such stupendous mercy?

See the myriads whose broken hearts he has healed; see them rejoicing on earth, or shouting their hallelujahs in Heaven. Are we not ready to clap our hands for joy, and to break forth into acclamations and hosannahs?

There is not any part of Christ's work, whether as performed by him, or enjoyed by us, but what calls upon us to glorify God with our whole hearts; and to all eternity will the praises of God resound from myriads of the redeemed, who, with united voices will exclaim, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever! [Revelation 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.13).

***~~This subject may be improved,~~***

***~~1. For conviction.~~***

All profess to hope for salvation through Christ, even though they are insensible of their lost and helpless state. But, if it is to the meek, the mourners, and the broken-hearted, that Christ came, what can they have to do with him, whose hearts are whole, and who are unhumbled before him? "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; nor did he come to call the righteous (those who imagine themselves righteous), but sinners to repentance." Let none then expect to participate in his salvation, unless they feel their need of it, and consent to receive it as his free and unmerited gift.

***~~2. For consolation.~~***

They who are sensible that they have sold Heaven and their own souls "for a thing of nothing," are ready to say, "Can such a lawful captive ever be delivered? [Isaiah 49:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.24-25)." We answer, You may instantly cast off your bonds and assert your liberty, if you will but accept the preferred mercy. Only believe in Christ, and the forfeited inheritance of Heaven shall be yours. Arise then, and sing, you who sit in the dust; put off your sackcloth, and gird yourself with gladness. Do not be afraid, us though the tidings were too good to be true; the jubilee is come, and the trumpet now sounds by the command of God himself; you have not to pay anything for your deliverance; but to receive it freely; you have nothing to fear from your enemies; for "the day of God's vengeance has come," and he will bruise all your enemies under your feet. Let but these tidings sink into your hearts; and God will glorify himself in your eternal happiness!

***~~#1005~~***

***~~BLESSEDNESS OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE~~***

**[Isaiah 61:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.9)**

"All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed."

In the different countries of the world, the inhabitants are characterized by distinctive differences in their features; and from generation to generation, notwithstanding the vast diversity of countenances, that peculiarity of features pervades them all. Nevertheless, amidst all the nations where they are scattered, the descendants of Abraham may be clearly discerned from the original inhabitants of the soil; they all show, by their countenances, their relation to their common parent.

And may we not say respecting Abraham's spiritual children also, that they may be distinguished from others? True it is, that in outward appearance they resemble those around them; but in heart, in spirit, and in life, they are different from all the world; and yet, however distant from each other in climate, in education, and in habits—they all resemble each other, and bear the stamp and character of God, as their common Father.

In the passage before us, which foretells the increase of the Church in the Apostolic and Millennial periods, this circumstance is noticed; a peculiar blessedness is said to belong to the people of the Lord, even such a blessedness as should be visible to all who beheld them, and should distinguish them from all other people on the face of the earth. In confirmation of this singular fact, we propose to show:

**I. That the Lord's people are pre-eminently blessed.**

***~~1. They are so now.~~***

Ponder the names given to believers in the Holy Scripture:  
"sons of God,"  
"children of light,"  
"children of obedience,"  
"children of promise,"  
"children of the living God,"  
"children of the Resurrection,"  
"children of the your Father in Heaven,"  
  
While all others are:  
"children of Hell,"  
"children of the devil,"  
"children of darkness,"  
"children of disobedience,"  
"children of the wicked one,"  
"children of wrath!"

Consider the state into which believers are brought:  
a state of adoption into God's family  
a state of pardon,  
a state of peace with God,  
a state of holiness.

While the whole world besides:  
lies in wickedness, and are utter strangers to all the blessings of the New Covenant.

Consider further their prospects in the eternal world:  
heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,  
a state of joy in God's presence,  
a state of eternal pleasure at His right hand!

While to all others there is nothing but "a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire about to consume the adversaries!"

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven!" [Matthew 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.12)

Are not such people then "a blessed seed?"

***~~2. They were so, in God's purpose, before they came into the world.~~***

We are astonished that many who profess to approve of the Articles of the Church of England, should be so averse to hear the smallest mention made of the counsels and decrees of God. That it is not profitable to be always insisting upon them, we readily admit; and that to dive too curiously into them, as though we were capable of comprehending the deepest mysteries in them, is highly presumptuous. But we must not on that account keep them wholly out of view, or be afraid of speaking as the Scripture speaks.

God did most assuredly decree from all eternity, who would be his people.

He "choose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4)"

He "predestined them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, [Ephesians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.5)."

"He gave them to Christ, [John 17:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.2); [John 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.6)",  
to be redeemed by his blood,  
to be saved by his grace, and  
to be made heirs of his glory! 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

Yes, he "wrote their names in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world! [Revelation 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 13.8)."

**3. They will be so to all eternity.**

*All their present privileges and blessings are only preparatory to their future state, when their happiness will be perfect, unchangeable, and everlasting.* They are to be "made fit for their inheritance" in this world; and, when they are completely ready for their nuptials with their heavenly Bridegroom, he will come and take them to himself, that they may live forever in the perfect fruition of his love, [Revelation 19:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.7). To bring them to this, was God's original design in choosing them. To fit them for it, is the end of all his dispensations, both of providence and grace. And to possess it, is the one object which they have in view, in all their labors, in all their sufferings, in all their conflicts.

Moreover, our text asserts that this their blessedness is visible to others, even to all who know them. We proceed therefore to inquire,

***~~II. Why it is that all who know them acknowledge this.~~***

The world at large do not know them, [1 John 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.1); they stand at so great a distance from the Lord's people, that they cannot properly be said to "see" them; and hence, from the indistinctiveness of their views, they imagine that these people are either vile hypocrites or deluded enthusiasts!

But those who have an opportunity of ascertaining their real character, are constrained to acknowledge them as the blessed of the Lord. This conviction is wrought on the minds of others by,

**1. Their delight in God.**

Their happiness is altogether in God, even in that God and Savior who bought them with his blood. They delight . . .  
in a sense of his favor,  
in the enjoyment of his presence,  
and in the performance of his will.

In this respect they differ from all other men on the face of the earth. Others may render unto God some *external*services. But the believer alone "loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," so as to serve him with all the powers and faculties of his soul. Hence there arises to the believer a peculiarity of character which elevates him above all other men, and makes it manifest that "he is of the seed which the Lord has blessed."

***~~2. Their superiority to the world.~~***

Believers, though in the world, "are not of it, even as Jesus Christ himself was not of the world;" they rise above its maxims, its pleasures, its interests, its honors, "they are crucified to it, and consider it as crucified to them."

But all other people are of the world; whether they live immersed in its cares, or secluded from its society—they still have their affections placed on things below, and not on things above. However they may pretend to despise the world, they are in reality its votaries, as much as if they were following it in the more accustomed way. The *monk*in his cell lives to himself and to the flesh, as much as the voluptuary, or the man of business.

Now here is another visible mark of distinction between the children of God and others; they may possess, and may enjoy, much of this world; but "though they use this world, they do not abuse it;" though they discharge their duties in it, they are in no respect in *bondage*to it. This also elevates their character in the eyes of all who know them, and distinguishes them as pre-eminently favored of their God.

***~~3. Their activity in doing good.~~***

Like their Divine Master, they "go about doing good." This is, as it were, the element in which they delight to move; and, though they themselves are a very "little flock" in comparison with those around them, it will be found that almost every great and extensive charity has proceeded from them. Of the charities which relate to the souls of men and their edification in the Christian faith, they, under God, are the sole authors; others may contribute to the spread of the Bible, the establishment of missions, and the promotion of religion in various ways; but the proposals that first set on foot those charities will be found, perhaps universally, to have originated with men of real piety.

Here again they differ from all around them; for though we thankfully acknowledge that there is a considerable portion of benevolence in many who are not truly devoted to God—yet there is no real zeal in them for the diffusion of the Gospel, and the salvation of a ruined world!

**4. The whole consistency of their conduct.**

Times and circumstances make no change in them. At all times, and under all circumstances, they are glad in non-essentials to consult the weakness of others; but in things essential they are equally unmoved by hopes or fears. They know not to please men, unless it is for their good to edification. *They have but one rule, the written Word of God; and to that they are determined to adhere in life and death*. But this is a character peculiar to them.

All other people, however pertinacious they may be in some things, will relax in others, according as inclination or self-interest may lead them. In regard to honor and honesty indeed a worldly man may be as immovable as others; but in things relating either to the exercise or encouragement of vital godliness, he cannot possibly maintain an uniform tenor of conduct; he lacks the principle which alone can produce a firm, uniform, and decided character; consequently where consistency in true religion is, there it will commend itself to all who are able to appreciate its value, and will stamp its possessor as a child of God.

***~~Advice.~~***

***~~1. Let all be ambitious to attain this honor.~~***

To be acknowledged as the friends and favorites of earthly monarchs, is no honor at all in comparison with that which is mentioned in our text. Yet this is within the reach of all.

As for that common objection, "If God has not chosen me, how can I help myself?" it is impious in the extreme, [Romans 9:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.19-20). We have nothing to do with the decrees of God, any farther than to refer all good to him, as its true and only source. Our duty is, not to dispute, but to obey; and if, in obedience to God's command, we will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be numbered among his spiritual seed, and be "blessed in him with all spiritual and eternal blessings."

***~~2. Let those who possess it endeavor to walk worthy of it.~~***

Remarkable is that exhortation of Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, "God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness! [2 Timothy 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 2.19)."

*Do we profess to be of the seed which the Lord has blessed? let us show that we are so by our conduct!* If we are "sons of God, we must be blameless and harmless, shining as lights in the world, and holding forth in our conduct the Word of life, [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)." It is in this way alone that we can approve ourselves to be God's chosen people; and in this way alone can we constrain our fellow-creatures to acknowledge the justice of our pretensions.

***~~#1006~~***

***~~THE BELIEVER CLAD WITH THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION~~***

***~~[Isaiah 61:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.10)~~***

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a Bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a Bride adorns herself with her jewels."

The abruptness of this passage cannot but strike everyone who reads it. But this is common in the prophetic writings. The prophets are accustomed to pass over hundreds or even thousands of years, as though they were already past; and to represent as existing before their eyes, the things which shall exist at the most remote periods. It is in this way that they express their confidence in the truth of their own predictions, and encourage us also to look forward to the accomplishment of them with the fullest assurance.

*The words are uttered, as it were, by the Jewish Church at the period of their conversion to Christianity*. In the three first verses of this chapter the Lord Jesus Christ declares his commission to save the world, verses 1-3 with [Luke 4:17-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 4.17-21).

In the three next verses, the Jews, notwithstanding their desolate condition previous to that time, are assured of their participation in his benefits, being themselves restored to their own country, and converted to the faith of Christ.

In the three next verses they are informed, that they shall be pre-emimently blessed, far above all that ever their nation experienced in its most favored seasons; insomuch, that they shall be objects of admiration and envy through the whole Gentile world.

These things being predicted, the Jewish Church is introduced as exulting in the actual experience of them, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God." But it is as members of the Christian Church that they use this language; and therefore without confining our attention to them,,

**I. We shall consider our text as expressing the believer's boast.**

To boast in anything of our own would be absurd and impious; but to boast in God is highly befitting; as David says, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise your name forever! [Psalm 44:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 44.8)."

***~~The mercy given to the believer is exceeding great.~~***

He is "clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with a robe of righteousness," that has been formed for him by God himself! In the 6th verse of this chapter the Jews are informed, that "they (not the tribe of Levi only, but their whole nation) shall be named the priests of the Lord, and the ministers of their God." Now for the priests there were certain garments appointed, wherein they were to minister, especially the linen ephod; which was intended to intimate to them the purity that befit their high office. For the high priest there were some other "garments for glory and for beauty, [Exodus 28:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 28.2)."

In reference to these it is that the believer says, "He has clothed me with the garments of salvation!" For every believer under the Christian dispensation is "a king and a priest unto his God, [Revelation 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.6);" the whole body of them are "a royal priesthood, [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9);" and for them a robe of righteousness is prepared, which shall be to them a garment of salvation!

This robe of righteousness may be understood of that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought out for his people by his own obedience unto death, and "which is unto all, and upon all, those who believe in him! [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)." This is the righteousness which the Prophet Daniel speaks of as to be brought in by the Messiah, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24), and which Paul desired to possess, "not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but the righteousness which was of God by faith in Christ, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9)."

It is by imputing this righteousness to the believer that "Christ is made righteousness unto him, 1 Corinthians 1:30," and that he acquires that title which is given him by all his people, "The Lord our Righteousness, [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6)."

But these garments of salvation may also be understood of that righteousness which the Holy Spirit imparts to all who believe in Christ. He forms them anew; he enables them to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, [Romans 13:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 13.14);" or, in other words, to "put off the old man, and to put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, [Ephesians 4:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.24)." This is the idea which the priestly garments were more immediately intended to convey; for *though they were an outward covering, they were chiefly emblematic of inward purity*; in reference to which it is said, "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation! [Exodus 19:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 19.6)." This may well be called "a garment of salvation;" for, though it is not that which justifies us before God, it constitutes our fitness for the heavenly inheritance, [Colossians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.12), and is that "without which no man shall see the Lord, [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.14)."

With these garments and this robe is the believer clothed; the very moment he comes to Christ, the one is *imputed*to him, so that he is "accepted in the Beloved, [Ephesians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.6);" and the other is begun *within*him, to be progressively advanced and "perfected unto the day of Christ, [Philippians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 1.6)."

In this he may well boast.

So far is it from being an act of presumption to boast in this, it is the believer's duty to do so; for the Prophet Isaiah expressly says, "Surely shall one say: In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, [Isaiah 45:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24-25)."

The believer ought to contemplate the mercies he has received, and to acknowledge the goodness of God in conferring them upon him. If he did not give glory thus unto his God, "the very stones would cry out against him!"

Such being the believer's experience, we shall not wonder at,

***~~II. We shall consider our text as expressing the believer's determination.~~***

When the blessed Virgin was encouraged on the mercy given to her, she burst forth into this devout acknowledgment, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, [Luke 1:46-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.46-47)."

In the same way, every believer, reviewing the mercies conferred on him, says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God!" This determination is:

***~~1. Highly reasonable.~~***

Contemplate the comparison which the prophet himself institutes between the ornaments thus put on the believer, and those in which people are accustomed to deck themselves at the celebration of their nuptials; for "he is covered with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Are they happy in the prospect of their union, and shall not he be happy in the union which has already taken place between Christ and his soul? For it is not only to *serve*his God that he is now brought, but to *enjoy*him; and that too in a union the most intimate and endeared that can possibly be conceived! A man and his wife are one flesh; but "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit! [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)."

Nor is this union in prospect merely, but in actual existence. From the moment that the believer is clothed with the garments of salvation, he is espoused to his God; he is set apart for God; and God reserves himself, as it were, for the believer, [Hosea 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.3); and in due time the union will be perfected in glory.

Does not this call for joy and thanksgiving? See what feelings it will create in Heaven, the very instant that the period shall have arrived when the Spouse shall be presented to her Lord, to be happy forever in more immediate fellowship with him, "Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) [Revelation 19:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.5-8)."

Shall the believer then wait until he arrives in Heaven before he begins his joy? No, the language of his heart and lips should be that of David, "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together! [Psalm 34:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 34.1-3)."

Thus will he not be contented with praising God himself; he will stir up all around, to join him in this delightful, this reasonable service!

***~~2. Most pleasing to God.~~***

The command of God to every believer is, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice! [Philippians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.4)." "Let Israel rejoice in Him who made him; and the children of Zion be joyful in their king! [Psalm 149:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 149.2)." Indeed it is in this way alone that we can give him the honor due unto his name. It may appear as if our feeble praises were nothing; and it is true that they can add nothing to the Lord; but still it is true, that they are the tribute which he requires, and by which he considers himself as honored, "Whoever offers me praise, glorifies me; and to him who orders his conversation aright I will show the salvation of God, [Psalm 50:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 50.23)."

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

**1. Let none put away this honor, as too great for them to expect.**

It is not uncommon for people of a desponding frame of mind, to think that such privileges and blessings are not for them. But can anyone be in a more hopeless state than the Jews? View them in any light, and say whether there is, humanly speaking, any probability of their being brought to the state described in the preceding context, and to the frame of mind expressed in our text? Yet that shall be; nor shall all the powers of darkness ever prevent it. Be strong then, and of good courage, desponding soul; and go unto your God with the prayer of faith. Then, though you have been like the prodigal in extravagance and sin, you shall be clothed in the best robe that is in your Father's house, and "be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy! Jude verse 24."

***~~2. Let none abuse this honor to the purposes of licentiousness.~~***

There are those who "turn the very grace of God into licentiousness;" and who pervert the doctrine of imputed righteousness to sanction and to justify their continuance in sin. But it is a certain fact, "that Christ is never made *righteousness*to any man, without being made his *sanctification*also! [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)." If Christ has redeemed you by his blood, it is that you may be made "a special people, zealous of good works, [Titus 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.14)."

*Without this inward change, all your joy and glorying will be an empty boast; and "every sacrifice which you offer to your God, will be an abomination to him!* [Proverbs 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 15.8)." You well know the fate of him who presumed to sit down at the marriage supper, not having on a wedding garment. And if he, a mere guest, "was cast out into outer darkness," what must be the fate of one who should claim the privileges of the Bride herself, while yet she possessed not the only qualities that could endear her to the Lord? Be assured, you must be "all glorious *within*, and have your *clothing*also of wrought gold," if you would find acceptance with the King of kings, and "be brought with gladness and rejoicing to the palace" of the heavenly Bridegroom! [Psalm 45:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.13-15).

***~~#1007~~***

***~~THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD TO GOD PROMISED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 61:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.11)~~***

"As the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to bring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

Truth when delivered in simple terms, does not so forcibly impress the mind, as when it is embodied, as it were, in some image that is visible before our eyes; for a great number of ideas are, by means of a metaphor, presented to us at once; and, having been long familiarized to our mind, they require no stretch or intenseness of thought to bring them together; so that we view a subject, as it were, almost in its full extent, without the labor of prosecuting it in its several parts.

To the great mass of mankind this species of instruction is peculiarly beneficial; because it puts the poor on an equal footing with the rich, and, in many respects, enables the illiterate peasant to comprehend truth as extensively and as accurately as the most learned philosopher.

The conversion of the world, and of the Jewish nation more especially, is the subject here spoken of; and it is predicted as resembling the spring season, wherein the whole face of nature is changed. Now, every one, however ignorant, beholds this change, and is able, in a great measure, to appreciate both its extent and value; and consequently may look forward to the accomplishment of the prediction with a saving interest which a more labored and extended statement might fail to excite.

Let us then consider,

***~~I. The comparison here instituted between the natural and spiritual world.~~***

In the natural world, the parts which are uncultivated present to the view a dreary and desolate wilderness; but, when brought into cultivation, they assume altogether a new appearance, producing everything which is beautiful to the eye, or profitable for the use of man. It is necessary, however, that human agency should be employed in effecting this change; though, after all that man can do, the work is God's alone.

In these four particulars the comparison may well be traced.

***~~1. Barren beyond expression are the countries that are destitute of spiritual cultivation.~~***

What is the very religion of such countries, but a mixture of the darkest ignorance with the most gloomy superstition? And if such is their religion, which is under regulation and restraint, then what must be their habits when subjected to no restraint? A desert, or a wilderness, that brings forth nothing but briers and thorns, is a just a picture of their state.

***~~2. But, through the Gospel of Christ, a wonderful change is wrought.~~***

See it in the people on the day of Pentecost; their hands were yet reeking with the Savior's blood; yet, by the labors of a few short hours, not less than three thousand souls were "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Such is the change which the Gospel operates, wherever it is received into the heart, [Colossians 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.6), "instead of the brier grows up the fir-tree, and instead of the thorn grows up the myrtle-tree, [Isaiah 55:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.13);" and the whole "desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose."

***~~3. This is effected through the instrumentality of man.~~***

As, in the productions of the garden and the field, it is by human labor that fertility is produced; so it is by the ministry of man, that God extends to men the blessings of salvation; as it is said, "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without a preacher, [Romans 10:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.14)."

**4. The power, however, that effects it is God's alone.**

In man himself there exists no power to produce anything that is spiritually good; no, "not so much as to think a good thought! [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5)." On the contrary, "in his heart there is nothing but evil, and that continually! [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 6.5)." The work, as far as it prevails in any man, is God's alone, [2 Corinthians 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.5). As to him must be ascribed the glory of all the products of the earth; so must all spiritual good, in whoever it is found, be referred to him as its true and proper source, 1 Corinthians 4:7. And if this is the case with respect to all the good that is in man, much more must it be so as it respects any good that is wrought by man. Even "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but *God alone can give the increase*, [1 Corinthians 3:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.6)." As far as relates to the practical efficiency even of the best means, the creature is nothing, and God is all, [1 Corinthians 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.7).

From the image in which the prediction is conveyed, let us turn to,

***~~II. The change itself, which is predicted in it.~~***

The passage primarily belongs to the Jews; and declares, as the whole preceding and following contexts do, their restoration to God, to the admiration and astonishment of the whole world. We need not, however, confine it to them; but may contemplate generally,

**1. The change described.**

Behold the whole world, Jewish as well as Gentile, yes, and I must add, the Christian world too; how little is there of vital and evangelical "righteousness" to be seen! As for "praise," except among a very small remnant of true believers, it is never heard ascending to the throne of God. A *form*of godliness, indeed, is common; but such piety as existed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and such devotions as were poured forth by the holy Apostles, are rare indeed; so rare, that neither is the one seen, nor the other heard, but as a strange thing to be gazed at with wonder, or be stigmatized as folly! [1 Peter 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 4.4).

But it shall not be always so; for, in God's time, righteousness shall spring up, as it were, not partially on this or that favored spot, but simultaneously, like the verdure of the spring upon the face of the whole earth. Though the Word is sown only like "an handful of corn upon the tops of the mountains, its fruit shall shake like the woods of Lebanon, and the converts be like the piles of grass that cover the earth, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16)." "In every place, too, will incense be offered, and a pure offering" of praise and thanksgiving, [Malachi 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.11); so that earth will be an emblem, and an foretaste, of Heaven. Then will be realized that vision of the beloved Apostle, who "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, [Revelation 21:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.2)." For this period we look with the strongest possible assurance, even for "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness! [2 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.13)."

***~~2. The excellency of this change.~~***

View this change, either as it respects *God*and his honor, or *man*and his happiness. It is grievous to reflect that God is almost banished from this lower world; and that the Savior, who came down from Heaven to redeem it, is scarcely known, or known only to be dishonored and blasphemed!*Truly, it is a wonder that a world so lost in wickedness is not burnt up, as Sodom and Gomorrah!*Indeed it would be so, but for the elect's sake. God in tender mercy spares it, because he has ordained that one day this barren fig-tree shall yield him fruit; and unnumbered millions, who shall spring from the loins of his inveterate foes, shall rise "a new creation," and "be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, to all eternity."

*And how blessed will this change be to our fallen race!* At present, men are but miserable creatures, full of evil passions, "hateful in themselves, and hating all around them! [Titus 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 3.3)." Yes, they are also filled with terrible forebodings in relation to their eternal state. But then, freed from the bonds of sin and the apprehensions of death, and living in the enjoyment of God's presence and in the prospect of his glory—they will go on their way rejoicing. Every day will bring them an augmentation of bliss, and be, as it were, a prelude of eternal felicity. Not that this blessedness shall then commence on earth; no; it is already experienced by thousands, who can bear their testimony, that, both in respect of holiness and happiness, they have known a transition, as great as from the wintry aspect of a desolate wilderness to the spring beauty of a highly-cultivated garden!

Such is the change which is now fast approaching; and such is "the work of God's hands, wherein he will before long be glorified" throughout the earth, [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21).

***~~See then, Beloved:~~***

***~~1. What you should seek for yourselves.~~***

Look for such a change to be wrought in your hearts. This is conversion; this is salvation begun in the soul; this is the indispensable requisite for the enjoyment of Heaven. Cast your eyes around you, and see the face of nature now, as contrasted with its appearance during the winter months; you see it; you admire it; you enjoy it.

O! let the great Gardener behold this blessed change in you! Do not let the showers of grace, which he pours forth around you, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, which he causes to shine upon you—be received in vain; for then will you only bring down the heavier curse upon your souls, as the Apostle Paul has warned you, "The earth that drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and brings forth herbs fit for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which bears briers and thorns is rejected, and is near unto cursing; whose end is to be burned!" Pray rather to God, that his Holy Spirit may be poured out upon you, as "rain upon the mown grass, [Psalm 72:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.6);" and that your beloved Savior may "come down into your souls, as into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits, Song of Solomon 4:16."

Do not be contented with any measure of fruitfulness which at any time you may have attained; but, if there be the blade, look for the ear; and if there be the ear, look for the full grain in the ear, [Mark 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 4.28);" that "you may be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; and that he may be glorified."

***~~2. What you should desire for the world at large.~~***

Take for your prayer these words of the prophet, "Drop down, O heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation; and let righteousness spring up together! [Isaiah 45:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.8)." You have abundant encouragement to address your God in these terms, because he has absolutely promised that the event predicted shall be accomplished, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God! [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2)."

Shall such prospects be opened to us, and we feel no desire to have them realized? Let us be ashamed that we can be so regardless of God's honor, and so indifferent about the salvation of our fellow-men. And, while we pray to God to effect this great work, let us, according to our respective abilities, be "fellow-workers with him;" and never rest until "the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest! [Isaiah 32:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 32.15)."

***~~#1008~~***

***~~THE CHURCH A ROYAL DIADEM~~***

***~~[Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.3)~~***

"You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God."

It was promised to our blessed Lord, that, "when he would have made his soul an offering for sin, he would see a seed, who should prolong their days, and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in his hands." These promises are to be fulfilled in the conversion of souls to him; and then only will they be fully accomplished, when all the kingdoms of the world are his, and when the entire Church, both of Jews and Gentiles, shall be "a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand."

In another part of his writings, the prophet says, that "Jehovah shall in that day be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty unto the remnant of his people, [Isaiah 28:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 28.5)." And that appears an expression suited to the occasion.

But the language of our text seems altogether inexplicable. That God should be "a crown of glory" to us, as adding glory to us, and crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies, is conceivable enough; but that we should be a royal diadem to him, is utterly inconceivable. Yet so it is; and the declaration of it to us will lead me to show:

***~~I. In what estimation God holds his Church and people.~~***

To form a just idea of this subject, we must consider in what light an earthly monarch views his crown; and then transfer to Jehovah those feelings, as far as they will comport with the holiness of his Nature, and the dignity of his divine Majesty.

***~~1. God regards his Church as an emblem of his power.~~***

Crowns and scepters are generally used as emblems of royalty, and as bearing witness to the power of Him who is invested with them. Now God's Church and people are precisely such "witnesses for him." The works of *creation*indeed testify of his eternal power and Godhead, and that in terms that are intelligible to all, [Romans 1:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.19-20); but the *new creation*of his people speaks no less strongly on this subject.

By sin, they are fallen from the image in which they were first created, and are transformed into the very likeness of Satan himself! Now, to repair these ruins, to cancel, in consistency with God's perfections, the guilt that has been contracted, to purge away all the pollution with which the soul is defiled, to impress again upon it the divine image, and to render it fit for the enjoyment of God himself in Heaven—is confessedly a work which no finite imagination could ever have contemplated.

But God has wrought it; he has wrought it for every individual of his Church and people; and this it is, which, in the judgment of the angelic host, brings "glory to God in the highest." It is this in which "the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," is pre-eminently displayed, [Ephesians 1:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.19-20). Perhaps in no book upon earth will there be found more energetic language than this; and this proclaims him, throughout the whole universe to be "King of kings, and Lord of lords!"

***~~2. God regards his Church as a monument of his love.~~***

Nothing does a monarch behold with more delight than his crown. And with what delight does God behold his Church and people, whom he accounts:  
"his peculiar treasure, [Exodus 19:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 19.5-6). [Psalm 135:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 135.4),"  
his most inestimable "jewels, [Malachi 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.17)."

"He has chosen them in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and predestined them to be to the praise of the glory of his grace! [Ephesians 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-6);" and he delights in them in that peculiar view. As says the Prophet Zephaniah, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing! [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)."

***~~3. God regards his Church as an object of his peculiar care.~~***

Were his crown threatened, and a confederacy formed to wrest it from him, a monarch would exert himself to the uttermost to defend it. And what will not Jehovah do for the preservation of his Church and people? He has declared that "neither the power nor the policy of Hell shall ever prevail against them! [Matthew 16:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 16.18);" that "none shall ever pluck them out of his hands! [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29);" but that "they shall be kept by the power of God unto everlasting salvation! [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5)." They are in the palm of his hand, held fast by him, against all the efforts of their enemies. "Lest any should hurt them, he keeps them night and day, [Isaiah 27:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.3);" nor shall the least jewel of his crown be found lacking in it, [Amos 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.9).

How determined he is to keep them, may be seen by his own gracious declarations in the Prophet Jeremiah, "I will rejoice over them, to do them good; and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul! [Jeremiah 32:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.41)." "They are to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, [Jeremiah 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.11);" and he will never allow so much as one of them to perish! [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14).

Seeing, then, that God esteems his people so highly, we may perceive,

***~~II. The interest which we also, from this consideration, should take in their welfare.~~***

They should undoubtedly be dear to us.

***~~1. We should take a lively interest in the Church at large.~~***

We are taught, in our daily prayers, to make this a leading petition, "May Your kingdom come." And we should not only desire it, but labor to promote it to the utmost of our power. We should labor in it for the world's sake. Who would not wish that the wretched slaves of Satan should be rescued from his dominion, and be brought into the liberty of God's dear children? It matters not whether they belong to the civilized or uncivilized world; for with God "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all! [Colossians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.11)." The basest Hottentot, who is brought to the knowledge of Christ, is made a jewel in the Redeemer's crown, and is not a whit less dear to him than the greatest monarch upon earth. And should we account any labor too great, if perhaps we may be instruments in God's hands to "pluck brands out of the burning," and to form them as pillars for the temple of our God; or to wrest jewels from Satan's crown, and polish them for the crown of our Redeemer? I say, the man who pants not to help forward such offices of love as these, has yet to learn wherein true love consists.

And should we not engage in this work for our Redeemer's sake? Has he left his throne in glory for us, and submitted to death, even the accursed death upon the cross for us? And shall we feel no zeal for his glory? Shall we be indifferent, whether he ever "sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied?" The prospect of bringing many sons to glory was "the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross and despised the shame, until he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God! [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)." Shall we be indifferent, whether he ever attains that joy? Even the honor of having "men as our own joy and crown of rejoicing" in the latter day, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20, might well be a sufficient stimulus to our exertion in their behalf; but, *to gather them as jewels for the Redeemer's crown, jewels in whom he shall be glorified to all eternity, should be regarded by us as the most honorable office that can be sustained, the most delightful work in which it is possible to be engaged*.

***~~2. We should take a lively interest in the Jewish Church in particular.~~***

It is of them that the prophet speaks in the whole context, and to them chiefly that the words in my text refer. They were God's chosen people from the beginning; even from the moment that God called Abraham their father, and entered into covenant with him. It was to them that he revealed himself as their God in a more eminent and peculiar way than he was of any other people; and in them has he been more glorified than in the whole world besides. Though they are under his displeasure, scattered over the face of the whole earth—yet are they preserved in a way that no other people have ever been; and are kept for the express purpose, that his glory may again be displayed in them, far beyond what it has been at any former period of their existence. It is at the time of their destined conversion that they are to be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God." This is plainly declared by the Lord himself, "I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first; and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them! [Jeremiah 33:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.7-9)."

Hence are we called to be fellow-workers with God in their conversion. For Zion's sake we should not hold our peace; and for Jerusalem's sake we should not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

To this period God himself looks forward, even as a bridegroom to the day of his nuptials; saying, "As a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons (who build up the families of their ancestors) marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you! verse 1, 5." At that period, through the labors of God's people, verse 10, shall the attention of the whole world be directed to them, verse 11, and men "shall call them: The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, a people sought out, a city not forsaken! verse 12."

Say then, brethren, whether we should not, both by secret prayers and public exertions, labor, all of us, according to our respective abilities, to hasten forward this glorious day, when "that people, hated and despised as they have been, shall become an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations," the branch of God's planting, the work of his hands, in which he shall be glorified! [Isaiah 60:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.15); [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21). Yes, "we should not hold our peace day nor night." "O you that make mention of the Lord," and profess to serve him, in the name of Almighty God I say to you, "keep not silence, and give God no rest, until he establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth, verse 6, 7."

***~~As a further improvement of this subject, I wish you particularly to observe:~~***

***~~1. What obligations we are under to look well to our ways.~~***

*Every true believer is a jewel in the Redeemer's crown!*And does it befit a people so honored, to be regardless of their ways? Should we not rather be studious, "as sons of God, to be blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining as lights in the world, holding forth in the whole of our conversation the Word of life! [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.15-16)."

I call upon you, brethren, to remember what a conspicuous place you are ordained to fill to all eternity; and to "walk worthy of your high calling," yes, "and worthy of the Lord himself too, unto all pleasing;" and however bright you already shine, "let your path shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

***~~2. What encouragement we have to labor for the Lord.~~***

It is no worthless object that we have in view. What if we are not able to labor on an extended scale? If, in the course of our whole lives, we can add but one jewel to Jehovah's crown, we shall have effected, both for God and man, a work that is superior in value to the whole world! See, then, whether God may not enable you to effect this in behalf of a parent or child, a brother or sister, a friend or servant, a neighbor, or some person in a state of deep affliction. It is not human skill that is requisite, like that which is necessary to prepare stones for an earthly crown. *The speaking of a word for God, and in dependence upon him, may, through his blessing, accomplish this glorious undertaking.*And, O! how rich a recompense would one single instance of success be for the labors of our whole life! If, indeed, we are able to extend our labors to the very ends of the earth, let us account it our highest privilege to do so. Let us, "for the joy that is set before us, endure any cross, and despise any shame," even as our Lord and Savior did—if, perhaps, we may prepare "a crown of rejoicing" for ourselves, [Philippians 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.1), and "a crown of glory" for our God!

***~~#1009~~***

***~~GOD'S DELIGHT IN HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 62:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.5)~~***

"As a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

In treating this subject, the utmost possible delicacy must be observed.

Among those who have paid attention to the sacred Oracles, no doubt exists but that very glorious days are near at hand, even those days when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas." In this conversion of the world to God, the Jewish people will take the lead, "their righteousness will go forth as brightness, and their salvation as a lamp that burns; and the Gentiles shall see their righteousness, and all kings their glory; and they shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name, verse 1, 2 with chapter 60:1-5." In them God shall be pre-eminently glorified; for "they shall be as a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God, verse 3."

At present they are in a state proverbially "desolate," as indeed they have been for nearly eighteen hundred years; but the time is coming when "their nation shall no more be termed Forsaken, nor their land be any more termed Desolate; but she shall be called Hephzibah; and her land Beulah; for the Lord delights in her, and her land shall be married, verse 4;" and God's delight in her shall be such as we have just now heard in the words of our text.

With all the caution due to so delicate a subject, let us consider,

***~~I. God's relation to his people.~~***

***~~The words primarily relate to the Jewish Church.~~***

God had called them from the most destitute condition, even that of a new-born infant, that had no one to administer to its necessities; and had separated them for himself, to be brought, in due season, into the most intimate and endeared relation to himself, [Ezekiel 16:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.4-8). "To himself he betrothed her, in loving-kindness and tender mercies, and in unchanging faithfulness, [Hosea 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.19-20);" and he assumed to himself the title and character of her Husband, "Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord Almighty is his name! [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5)." Yes, notwithstanding her unfaithfulness to him, he still acknowledges her as standing to him in the relation of a wife, "Turn, O backsliding children! says the Lord; for I am married unto you, [Jeremiah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.14)."

True, at present she is "forsaken and desolate;" but soon shall she be restored, agreeably to the prophetic declaration in my text, "As a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons (or, as Bishop Lowth translates it, your Restorer) marry you." If we retain our present translation, we must remember, that people, considered as born in the Church, are her "sons;" but, as uniting themselves to the Church, are her husband; and consequently the appellation, which in one point of view would be incongruous, may be admitted in the other view, especially in the high flights of Eastern poetry. Such a confusion, or rather such a bold combination of metaphors is not uncommon in the inspired writings. See [Ephesians 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.19-20), "fellow-citizens," "built." If we take Bishop Lowth's translation, not only will the metaphor be more just, but the unity of the whole passage will be preserved; God being the Bridegroom, who both takes the Church into union with himself, and rejoices over her as his Bride.

This event we look for at no distant period, when "those whom God has for a small moment repudiated, as a wife of youth, shall be gathered with great mercies, and be restored as in the days of old, [Isaiah 54:6-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.6-10), and live in most endeared communion with him for evermore, [Ezekiel 36:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.24); [Ezekiel 36:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.28).

***~~But the text may be fitly applied, also, to the Church of Christ.~~***

Christ is called the "Bridegroom," of his Church, [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29). To him has "every member of the Church been espoused as to a husband, and been presented as a chaste virgin, [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2). And so manifest is this relation between him and his people, that Paul, speaking expressly on the duties of husbands and wives, turns, and, with a most unlooked-for application of the subject, says, "This is a great mystery; for I speak concerning Christ and his Church! [Ephesians 5:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.31-32)."

The same Apostle, in another of his Epistles, enters very particularly into the subject; representing us as formerly "married to the law; but now, our former husband being dead, as united to another husband, even Christ; in order that, by grace derived from him, we may bring forth fruit unto God, [Romans 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.4)." Even to all eternity will this relation to him be acknowledged; for to John an angel from Heaven said, "Come here, and I will show you the Bride, the Lamb's Wife! [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9)."

Behold then, brethren, what an honor is here held out to us, that we may aspire after it, and attain it! What would a woman, in the lowest ranks of life, think of such a proposal coming to her from a king or prince? Would it excite no feelings in her mind? Would she pass it by, as a common thing, in which she had no interest? Would it not rather be made a subject of deep and serious reflection? Let us then, my brethren, realize the idea that the offer is now made to us; and that nothing but an obstinate refusal on our part can prevent the completion of this great object—a marriage-union with our God!

In perfect accordance with this sublime mystery is that which is here added, respecting,

**II. God's delight in his people.**

***~~There is no earthly joy superior to that which a bridegroom feels on his wedding day, in the presence of his bride.~~***

Now all his wishes are accomplished. Whatever fears or anxieties may have filled his bosom during the period of his attendance on her, he now finds them all entirety dispelled; and rejoices over his bride as his own peculiar property, in the possession of whom all his happiness is centered, and in whose beloved society he hopes to spend the remainder of his days on earth.

***~~Now, such is God's delight in the objects of his choice.~~***

Over the Jewish Church he greatly rejoiced, according to what he spoke by the prophet, "Behold! I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, [Isaiah 65:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.18-19)." Nothing can exceed the language of the Prophet Zephaniah to this effect, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing! [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)."

Nor is this a mere feeling in his bosom, but an active and efficient principle; as says the Prophet Jeremiah, "I will rejoice over them to do them good; and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul! [Jeremiah 32:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.41)."

And such also is his joy over all his chosen people, "He delights in them! [Proverbs 11:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 11.20)," and "manifests himself unto them, [John 14:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.21)," and maintains the most intimate communion with them, 1 [John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.3). He has prevailed over them, and in the day of his power has made them willing to surrender up themselves to him; and when he sees how entire their hearts are with him, "they having for him forgotten their own people and their father's house, he greatly desires their beauty, [Psalm 45:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.10-11)," and gives himself to them, as their God and portion forever! Yes, "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation! [Psalm 91:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 91.14-16)."

***~~Application~~***

***~~1. Let all, then, desire this high honor.~~***

To get advancement in this world, is universally considered as a most desirable attainment. But what connection can be compared with that proposed to us in the text; or what elevation is worthy of a thought in comparison with it?

Will any say, 'Alas! it is unattainable by me. I am so far off from God, that there can be no hope of my ever being brought into such a relation to him?'

I answer, Who are farther off from him than the Jews? Or who, according to human appearance, are so unlikely ever to have the text fulfilled to them as they? Yet of them are these things spoken, and to them shall they be fulfilled; and therefore every other person in the universe may assure himself, that, "if only he comes to God in the Savior's name, he shall on no account be cast out! [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 6.37)."

The person who seems to have most reason to despond, is he, who, after having once given himself to God, has departed from him; but to such does God expressly say, "If a man puts away his wife, and she goes from him, and become another man's—shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, says the Lord! [Jeremiah 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.1)."

To all then I say, without exception, "Return unto the Lord; and," however base your departures from him have been, "he will heal your backslidings, and love you freely! [Jeremiah 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.22)."

***~~2. Let those who profess to stand in this near relation to their God, walk worthy of it.~~***

What advice would any of you give to a beloved daughter, on the day of her nuptials, especially if she had been taken from a state of the lowest degradation, and united to one most exalted both in rank and piety?

Such is the advice which I would give to you. Stand at the remotest distance from all your former habits and associates. Get your *mind*, your *habits*, your very *taste*, assimilated to the mind of your divine Husband. "Be altogether for him, and for him alone! [Hosea 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.3)." Be as much his, in every faculty of your souls, as you desire that he would be yours in all his glorious perfections. Would you that his *love*should pre-eminently distinguish you; his *power*be exerted for you; and his *faithfulness*towards you be unchangeable? Then be such towards him, according to the utmost extent of your powers:  
loving him above all;  
knowing no will but his;  
seeking nothing but his honor;  
and living only for his glory!

Thus live with him on earth; and do not fear but that your bliss shall be consummated in Heaven for evermore!

Some interruptions to your joy may occur on earth; but in Heaven it shall be without alloy or intermission or end. When once you come to the Zion above, "everlasting joy shall be upon your heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! [Isaiah 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.10)."

***~~#1010~~***

***~~DUTY OF INTERCEDING FOR THE CHURCH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6-7)~~***

KJV. "I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, until he establish, and until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

NIV. "I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

It is melancholy to reflect, that notwithstanding God has given a revelation of himself to man above three thousand years, *there is not a sixth part of mankind that has ever so much as heard of salvation through the crucified Redeemer. And, of those who are called Christians, a very small portion indeed has any vital union with Christ, or experimental knowledge of his love.* In this view, even the Church itself may be termed Forsaken and Desolate.

But it will not be always thus. There is a period fixed in the Divine counsels, when the Jewish Church, being enlarged by vast accessions from every quarter of the globe, shall be called Hephzi-bah (my delight is in her), and Beulah (married); seeing that the Lord will delight in her, and regard her as his Bride! verse 4, 5.

To the hastening forward of that blessed time we all may contribute, and all ought to contribute to the utmost of our power. How we may be instrumental to the glorious work, we are told in the words before us; in considering which we shall show,

***~~I. What should be the great object of our solicitude.~~***

As having immortal souls, we are all concerned in the first place to seek salvation for ourselves. But our concern should extend to the Jewish Church, and to the whole world; we should desire not only to prosper in our own souls, but to see "Jerusalem," even the Church of the living God, prospering also, so as to be "a praise in the earth." In a word, our desire should be:

***~~1. That the light of the Gospel should be universally diffused.~~***

In the Gospel is contained the brightest discovery of all the Divine perfections as united and harmonizing in the work of Redemption; it is an exhibition of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

Now, in comparison with this, the works of creation have no glory, by reason of the glory that excels; the sun itself is darkness when compared with "the Sun of Righteousness who has arisen on the world with healing in his wings".

And where, but in the Church, is this glory seen? Not one ray of it shines in the whole world besides.

The Church then is "a praise in the earth," in proportion as this light shines forth in the earth. But alas! at present the greatest part of the world is under an eclipse. We hope, however, that in due time every intervening object will be removed; and that the light now rapidly spreading over the horizon, will extend its beams to regions that are yet lying in darkness and the shadow of death; and that it will shine, in its meridian splendor, not successively, but at once, on every portion of the habitable globe.

How greatly is this to be desired! If the light of *civilization*is esteemed a blessing, how much more must the light of *Salvation*be so; especially when, with that, the glory of God and of all his infinite perfections is displayed!

***~~2. That the efficacy of the Gospel should be universally experienced.~~***

In two views especially is the efficacy of the Gospel seen, namely, in comforting, and sanctifying all who embrace it. To what unspeakable comfort it raises an afflicted soul, is declared at large by the Prophet Isaiah, [Isaiah 61:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-3); as its sanctifying power is by the Prophet Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 33:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.6-8); and in both views it is "for a name of joy, a praise, and an honor, before all the nations of the earth! [Jeremiah 33:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.9)."

Its effect is uniformly to change a wilderness into a fertile garden, [Isaiah 35:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.1-2); [Isaiah 51:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.3); and to fill with the choicest shrubs the ground that was covered only with briers and thorns! [Isaiah 55:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.13).

Conceive this change effected in any place. What honor must accrue to that which causes the change, and what blessedness to the place where such a change is seen! Would not such a spot be as Goshen in the midst of Egypt? Such then is the Church, wherever the Gospel comes in its power; and such will the Church be in the whole earth, when once it shall have attained its destined extent and eminence. And is not this an object to be desired by all? Truly, if we have one spark of love to our fellow-creatures, or of zeal for God, we should look forward to that event as the consummation and completion of all our wishes.

That object, then, being so desirable, let us consider,

***~~II. In what way we should all endeavor to promote it.~~***

All may be instrumental in helping it forward:

**1. Ministers.**

They are "watchmen set on the walls of Jerusalem," and are commanded "not to hold their peace day nor night." In this expression there may possibly be a reference to those under the law, who ministered in the sanctuary by night as well as by day, [Psalm 134:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 134.1). Whether their "not holding their peace," refers to any public addresses, which, under the Gospel, are to be made from day to day by those who sustain the office of the ministry, we do not certainly know; but we are sure that it comprehends at least, if it does not exclusively relate to, the great work of intercession; in which ministers ought exceedingly to abound.

Whatever personal efforts they may make, they can do no good, if God himself does not interpose to make their work effectual, "Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God alone can give the increase." Ministers *must*pray, yes, must continue instant in prayer "night and day," if they would be successful in their ministrations! Compare [Acts 20:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.31) with [1 Thessalonians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 3.10) and [2 Timothy 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.3).

***~~2. Christians of every description.~~***

All who "make mention of the Lord" are bidden to intercede for the Church of God. But in the marginal translation those words are rendered "All the Lord's Remembrancers." This is the character which we are all to bear; God says, "Put me in remembrance, [Isaiah 43:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 43.26)." We are to remind him of all his gracious promises, just as Jacob did, [Genesis 32:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.12), and, like Jacob, to wrestle with him until we prevail; yes, in the confidence of success we should say like him, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me! [Genesis 32:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.24-26)."

This is frequently inculcated in the New Testament; the example of the Canaanite woman, and the parable of the importunate widow, are intended to show us that we should "pray and not faint," and that God will hear "those who pray day and night unto him, though he bears long with them, [Matthew 15:22-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 15.22-28) and [Luke 18:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.1-8)."

Now, though we are not to imagine that there is any reluctance in God to bless his Church—yet we are to persevere in prayer exactly as if we hoped to prevail by dint of importunity; yes, we are to "give God himself no rest," until he arises and executes the desired work. In this way *the lowest Christian in the world may render more service to the Church of God*, than either ministers or princes can in any other way; a human arm, however active or powerful, can put forth only a small measure of strength; but *prayer can call Omnipotence to its aid*, and effect whatever is necessary for the Church's welfare. While the success of Elijah remains written for our instruction, [James 5:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.16-18), no man has any right to ask, What can such a weak creature as I effect for the Church of God?

***~~This subject affords ample matter:~~***

***~~1. For reproof.~~***

How little have any of us considered the duty, and the efficacy of intercession! Instead of praying day and night for the conversion of the Jews, and the enlargement of the Christian Church, many of us find it difficult even to pray for ourselves. *Most Christians are quite content that the world should perish in their sins, provided that they themselves may be excused the trouble of exertion, and finally escape the wrath of God!*

Who among us does not blush at a review of his conduct in relation to this matter? Who, instead of fulfilling his duty as God's Remembrancer, does not himself need a remembrancer to remind him of his duty? Let this matter be duly considered among us; and *let us no longer, like Jonah, be indulging in sleep, when a whole world of sinners is needing our utmost exertions!*[Jonah 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jonah 1.5-6).

***~~2. For encouragement.~~***

The first verse of this chapter deserves particular attention; it is spoken by the same person that speaks in our text; it is Christ himself, or, at least, the prophet in his name, who says, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns." Now here is the very point which we ought supremely to desire: the conversion of the Jews, and the consequent conversion of the whole world; this is the true import of that expression, "Jerusalem being upraise in the earth."

Does God then fix his eye upon this glorious object? And shall not we? Is he constantly intent upon it? And shall not we? Is he determined in his own mind to take no rest until he has accomplished it? And shall not we be encouraged to pray to him respecting it? If he were averse to it, we might despair of ever prevailing upon him to change his mind; but when we know how entirely his own mind is bent upon it, and that he is ordering everything both in providence and grace with a view to it, we may well besiege the throne of grace, to remind him of his promises. Let us take courage then, and plead, if perhaps we may hasten forward the glorious day, and see, if not in the world at large—yet at least in our own immediate circle, Jerusalem to be indeed "a praise in the earth."

***~~#1011~~***

***~~RESTORATION OF THE JEWS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 62:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.10-12)~~***

KJV. "Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken."

NIV. "Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'" They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted!"

Truly wonderful is the power of faith; it looks through hundreds and thousands of years; and not only anticipates events as future, but sets them before the mind as present. In the prophetic writings this assured faith is frequently exhibited. The Prophet Isaiah in particular seems to have been endued with it in a pre-eminent degree. He rarely mentions the conversion either of Jews or Gentiles to the faith of Christ, but he represents it as already passing before his eyes, "Lift up your eyes round about," says he, "and see" these prophecies already accomplishing throughout the world. "Who are these that I behold flying as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? [Isaiah 49:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.18); [Isaiah 60:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.4); [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)."

In the chapter before us God had declared, that "he would not rest until he had caused the righteousness of his Church to go forth as brightness, and its salvation as a lamp that burns, verse 1." And this promise he had confirmed with an oath, verses 8, 9. To this Word and this oath the prophet gave such perfect and assured credit, that he addressed the Jews above a hundred years before they were carried captive to Babylon, as if they were already at the close of their captivity, and ready to be restored to their own land, "Go through, go through the gates," for the purpose of returning to your own country.

At the same time he looks forward also to the Jews in their present state of dispersion, and bids them receive their Messiah as already come for their deliverance; assuring them at the same time, that in returning to God through Him, they shall be restored to all the privileges which, by their rejection of him, they have forfeited.

His address to them sets forth in a very animated point of view the circumstances that shall take place at the time of their restoration:

**I. The preparation to be made for them.**

The former part of the address is directed immediately to them. As at the time of Cyrus's decree vast multitudes needed to be stirred up to avail themselves of the permission granted them to return to their own country, so now, when the gates are opened to them, they need repeated exhortations, "Go through, go through the gates." God says to them, "Go forth from Babylon; flee from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare you, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say, The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob! [Isaiah 48:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 48.20)." "Depart; for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward, [Isaiah 52:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.11-12)."

The remainder of the address is directed to all who have it in their power to facilitate their return. Here therefore we may see our duty towards them. We should without delay exert ourselves in their behalf:

***~~1. We should prepare their way before them.~~***

As, previous to the coming of our Lord himself, a Messenger was sent before him "to prepare his way, and to make his paths straight, [Isaiah 40:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.3-5) with [Luke 3:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 3.4-6)"—so God commands that we should "prepare the way of the people," whom he has scattered over the face of the whole earth. In order to facilitate their access to their own land, and to the heavenly Jerusalem, we should "gather out the stones," "the stumbling-blocks" which lie in their way, [Isaiah 57:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.14); and "cast up a highway" over those morasses, which present an almost insuperable obstacle to their return.

If it is asked, What are these stumbling-blocks, and these morasses? I answer:

1. *One stumbling-block is the ungodly lives of Christians; which give the Jews but too much reason to conclude that our religion is not a whit better than their own*.

2. Another stumbling-block is *the contempt with which we have treated them*, and which cannot but have incensed them against, not the followers only, but even the very name, of Christ!

3. The *divisions of the Christian Church*also present a very serious obstacle in their way; and we should do all in our power to heal these divisions, so that, if there still remains a diversity of sentiment on points of doubtful disputation, there may at least be a union of heart among all "who hold fast the Head," and who, we have reason to hope, are living members of Christ's mystical body.

Until they see some change in our conduct in these respects, we can scarcely hope to prevail upon them to embrace our principles, however strongly we may recommend and enforce them.

***~~2. We should "lift up the standard" of the cross to them.~~***

That is the standard which must be erected for the Gentile world, [Isaiah 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.10), and to that the Jewish people also must resort, [Isaiah 11:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.11-12). Under that cross, must all mankind be marshaled, [Zechariah 14:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 14.9), and come up to Zion, [Micah 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 4.1).

But how shamefully negligent have the Christian world been now for so many centuries, in not unfurling these banners to them, and endeavoring to enlist them into the service of our Lord! Never until lately have our Scriptures been translated into their language for their use; nor has ever any great and general effort been made to promote their conversion to the faith of Christ. It is only in a way of pains and penalties that they have been dealt with hitherto, and not in a way of kind instruction and affectionate admonition. But until this is done, what prospect is there of their conversion to the faith of Christ? Suitable means must be used; and I beg it to be particularly noticed, that God enjoins these means to be used, in order to the effecting of his gracious purposes towards them.

Do not let anyone imagine that the Jews are to be converted in any other way than the Gentiles are! There were miracles in the Apostolic age; but they were to aid, and not to supersede, the labors of men. So there may possibly be miracles in the Millennial age; but *it is by gospel instruction alone, that the Jews can be brought to a knowledge of the Gospel, and to faith in Christ as the true Messiah*.

To these general directions the prophet more distinctly adds,

***~~II. The proclamation to be reported to them.~~***

It has been thought by some, that we are under no obligation to seek the conversion of the Jews. But, not to mention the general order given to ministers to go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature, (which must include Jews as well as Gentiles,) here is in our text an express command, a proclamation from Almighty God himself, to the whole Gentile world, to say unto the Daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes!" Do not let this be forgotten; it is binding upon every one of us; and, if we disregard the injunction, we disregard it at our peril. We are here directed to make known to them by every possible means:

***~~1. The Savior's coming.~~***

The true character of the Messiah is here declared; He is a Savior; He is "salvation" itself; even the salvation of all who trust in him. "His reward is with him;" and it shall be conferred on all who receive him in faith and love. Who can depict the blessings which he will bring to the believing soul? They are such as "no *eye*ever saw, no *ear*ever heard, no *heart*ever adequately conceived." "The peace" with which he will invest the soul, "passes all understanding;" "the joy" with which he will inspire it, is "unspeakable;" and the "riches" with which he will endow it, are "unsearchable." Let the believer, though but of the lowest class, be appealed to, and he will confirm this truth from his own experience.

Moreover, "his work is before him;" and Christ will never leave it until it is fully accomplished. In the days of his flesh, he rested not until he could say, "It is finished!" Nor will he rest now until he has fulfilled all that he has undertaken, and brought every one of his elect to glory. "Of those that were given him of the Father, he never lost one, nor will ever allow one to be plucked out of his hands."

All this is to be made known to the Jewish people. They should be informed what a Savior there is; we should bring to their ears these glad tidings, "lifting up our voice with strength, and saying to all the cities of Judith: Behold your God! [Isaiah 40:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.9)."

***~~2. The benefits Christ will confer upon them.~~***

Desolate indeed is their condition at present; but it shall not be always so; the time is coming when they shall "no more be termed, *Forsaken*, verse 4;" but shall be restored to all the honors and blessings which they once possessed. Once they were "a holy people to the Lord their God, even a special people above all upon the face of the earth, [Deuteronomy 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.6);" and "high above them all, in praise, and in name, and in honor, [Deuteronomy 26:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 26.19)." And such shall they again become, when they unite in "seeking the Lord their God, and David their king, [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.5)." As partakers of his mercies in common with the Gentile world, they will be called, "The redeemed of the Lord;" but with an emphasis peculiar to themselves will they be termed, "Sought out, and not forsaken."

They appear to be forsaken at present; but it shall then appear that God's eye was upon them for good even in the midst of their deepest humiliation; and efforts shall be made for their recovery, which shall distinguish them pre-eminently as objects of his love, whom he has "sought out" with care, and brought home with joy.

Such are the encouraging statements to be made to them; and such statements in God's good time shall be effectual for the bringing of them home in triumph to their God.

***~~That I may not overlook the personal interests of those to whom I speak, let me in conclusion say,~~***

***~~1. Take care that you experience these things in your own souls.~~***

In your natural and unconverted state, you are as far off from God as the Jews themselves. You are "in a world that lies under the power of the wicked one, [1 John 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.19)" and you need to come out from it, as much as they did from Babylon, [2 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.17), compared with [Isaiah 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.17). You need also to have "straight paths made for your feet," that you may advance the more easily towards the heavenly Jerusalem, [Hebrews 12:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.13).

The same encouragements too you need, in order to induce you to embrace the offered salvation. The excellency of the Redeemer, the riches of his grace, the fullness and certainty of his salvation—need to be set before you, and the honors and glories of the eternal world held forth to your view; so that you may brave the dangers of a dreary wilderness, and seek your happiness in Zion!

There is not, in fact, anything to be done by a Jew, that is not to be done by you; Go forth then yourselves, and show the way to your Jewish friends; and let them see in you the excellence of that religion which you exhort them to embrace.

***~~2. Endeavor to promote the experience of them in your Jewish friends.~~***

I beg permission to repeat what I have before asserted, that it is by the use of suitable means that God will accomplish their conversion. See what means the Apostles used, in the first ages of the Church. Such are we also to use in the present day. If this is doubted, let any man tell us where God has dispensed with them? My text, even if there were no other passage to the same effect, sufficiently shows, that he has not dispensed with *means, but requires them to be used by us in a humble dependence upon him*. Let the directions of the text then be followed by us. Let us endeavor to show them, that God has now made a way for their return to him. Let us labor by all possible means to remove from them the stumbling-blocks that lie in their way, and by courtesy and love to smooth their way before them. Let us encourage them to the utmost of our power, by pointing out to them the Messiah, of whom their law and their prophets have so fully testified; and by setting before them the great and precious promises which God has given them of acceptance through him.

I say, let us strive in earnest to convey to them the blessings, which, through the labors of their forefathers, we ourselves have received. "Freely we have received; let us freely give;" and, if but a single soul be given us as the fruit of our labors, *let us remember, that one soul is of more value than the whole world!*

***~~#1012~~***

***~~MESSIAH'S TRIUMPHS~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.1)~~***

KJV. "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

NIV. "Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

[Preached April 10th, 1814, the morning that the news of Bonaparte's abdication of the throne of France was announced at Cambridge]

To us who are accustomed to view the whole plan of Christianity accomplished, the tidings of our Lord's *resurrection*are heard without any particular emotion. The subversion of a dynasty that has spread desolation and misery through one charter of the globe, is now occupying every mind and every tongue; but the subversion of Satan's empire over the whole world, and the destruction of sin and Satan, death and Hell, by the resurrection of Christ, is regarded as an old uninteresting tale. It was not however so uninteresting to the first disciples; when they were mourning under the most grievous disappointment, and were informed that their Lord was risen from the dead, they could not believe it; and when some who had ascertained the fact, went to inform the others, they were considered as visionaries, who were either deceiving or deceived; but when the point was fully established, nothing could exceed the joy that pervaded every bosom.

Somewhat of that holy feeling was expressed by the prophet in the words before us. Certain it is, that our Church so understands the passage; because it is appointed to be read, instead of an Epistle, on the Monday preceding Easter. Nor can there be any doubt but that this is its real import. It is to Jesus that the questions in our text refer; and he it is who gives the answer to them. Let us consider then our text:

***~~I. In a way of solemn inquiry.~~***

There are those who think the person spoken of was Judas Maccabeus; because he gained a great victory over the Edomites, who were afterwards compelled to embrace the Jewish religion. But it is evident that the words cannot refer to him, because he could not possibly speak of himself in such terms, as are used both in our text and in the following verses, verse 4. *It is to the Lord Jesus Christ alone that the words can with any propriety be applied*.

The Edomites, as being the most bitter enemies of the Jews, [Amos 1:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 1.11-12), were types and figures of the Church's enemies, on whom God has decreed to take signal vengeance, [Isaiah 34:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 34.5-6); and it is probable that the full accomplishment of this prophecy in its literal sense is yet to come. But in its *mystical*and *spiritual*sense it has already been fulfilled, by the triumphs of our Lord Jesus Christ over all his spiritual enemies.

***~~He triumphed over them in his death upon his cross.~~***

It seemed as if his enemies then triumphed over him; but he never triumphed more than in the hour when he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. It is true, that Satan then bruised his heel; but he bruised Satan's head, and inflicted a wound that will issue in his everlasting destruction! [Genesis 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.15). Previous to this final combat he proclaimed the certain conquest, [John 12:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 12.31); [John 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.11); and in it he gained the victory. He entered, as it were, into the very palace of the god of this world, and spoiled his goods! [Luke 11:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 11.21-22). Yes, "he spoiled all the principalities and powers of Hell, triumphing over them openly on the cross, [Colossians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.15)." It was by making an atonement for sin that he effected reconciliation between God and man; and thus "by his death he destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," and delivered from their "sore bondage" the countless millions of his redeemed people! [Hebrews 2:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.14-15).

***~~He triumphed over them still more in his resurrection and ascension.~~***

If in his death he discharged our debt, in his resurrection he was liberated from the prison of the grave, and declared to have fulfilled everything that was necessary for man's salvation. Hence he is represented as a mighty Conqueror, surrounded by myriads of the heavenly host, and "leading captivity itself captive," dragging, as it were, at his chariot wheels, the vanquished powers of darkness! [Colossians 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 2.15). In his death the victory was gained; but in his resurrection and ascension the triumph was celebrated and proclaimed. Hence to these the Apostle Peter refers us, as unquestionable evidences of his Messiahship, and as demonstrations that he is the only Savior of the world, [Acts 2:32-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 2.32-36).

**He has carried on, and will before long complete, his triumphs in the gathering together of his elect people from every quarter of the globe.**

On the day of Pentecost he rescued three thousand vassals from Satan's tyrannic sway; and from that day he has set at liberty multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles, by the operation of his grace upon their hearts. Yet daily too is he still gaining more and more ground on the dominions of the wicked one; and before long will his triumphs be complete, when "all the kingdoms of the world" shall acknowledge him as their Sovereign, their Savior, and their God!

Let us now view the words of our text,

***~~II. In a way of devout reflection.~~***

The mode of expression used by the prophet, naturally leads us to this, as indeed the most appropriate view. When he asks, "Who is this?" he intends to express his admiration of the object; just as the prophet Micah does of Jehovah, "Who is a God like unto you! [Micah 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 7.18). Let us then contemplate our adorable Savior, as exhibited to us in our text.

***~~1. Let us contemplate the representation given of him.~~***

Commentators who interpret this passage of the Savior, as having his garments dyed with his own blood, quite mistake its meaning; it is with the blood of his *enemies*that he is covered, just as a warrior may be supposed to be, when returning from the slaughter of his enemies. And this is the view frequently given of him in the Holy Scriptures, [Revelation 19:11-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.11-18); [Revelation 19:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.21). Let us then behold with admiration this mighty Conqueror, now so "glorious in his apparel, and traveling in the greatness of his strength." He appears not as one exhausted with fatigue, but as one whom no enemy can resist. Let us ascribe to him the honor due unto his name; and let the song by which the typical victory of Jehovah at the Red Sea was celebrated, be sung by us; for our Jesus "has triumphed gloriously!" "Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! [Exodus 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.1); [Exodus 15:3-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.3-11)."

***~~2. Let us contemplate the description given of himself.~~***

In his reply to the question, "Who is this?" he informs us who he is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Not only does he "speak in righteousness," as the true and faithful witness, but he speaks of righteousness, and is the great Herald that proclaims it to a ruined world. He himself has by his death "brought in an everlasting righteousness, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24)," which shall be "unto all, and upon all, who believe in him [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)." Hear with what extreme earnestness he proclaims it to the whole world, [Isaiah 51:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.4-6); and shall we not adore such a Benefactor as he? Shall sinners, who have no righteousness of their own, "be made the righteousness of God in him, [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.21)," and not exult? Shall they not glory in him as "The Lord their righteousness, [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6)," and boast, each one for himself, "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength! [Isaiah 45:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.24-25)."

But consider further how "mighty he is to save;" he is "a Savior and a Great One! [Isaiah 19:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 19.20)," even "a Prince and a Savior! [Acts 5:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 5.31);" or rather as he is called by an inspired Apostle, "The great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ! [Titus 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 2.13)." This is the great argument whereby he encourages us all to trust in him, "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God! [Isaiah 45:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.22)."

This is the view in which all his ministers are commanded to hold him forth; we must "lift up our voice with strength, and say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! [Isaiah 40:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.9-10)."

While then from "his garments dyed in blood" we discern how able he is to destroy—let us also remember, that he is able to save, [James 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.12), yes, "able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him! [Hebrews 7:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 7.25)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who believe in him.~~***

Keep your eyes steadily fixed on this glorious Savior; and remember, that "he trod the wine-press *alone*, verse 3." There was none with him in the conflict he sustained; nor must anyone presume to claim a share in the honor of his victories; his was the power; his must be the glory. So indeed must be the glory of all that is wrought in us; for it is by his grace alone that we can do even the smallest good. Let him then be gratefully acknowledged as "the Author and the finisher" of your whole salvation.

***~~2. Those who entertain no admiring thoughts of him.~~***

O that you would reflect how terrible it will be to be found among his enemies! Let it suffice that his garments are dyed with the blood of others; and let them not be dyed with *your*blood. In the very passage before us, he tells us how insupportable his wrath will be, verse 6. O provoke it not! but humble yourselves before him, while yet the day of mercy lasts; for "God has set him upon his holy hill of Zion," and has engaged to make all "his enemies his footstool." And *be assured that if you will not bow before the scepter of his grace, he will "break you in pieces as a potter's vessel!*[Psalm 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.6); [Psalm 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.9)."

***~~#1013~~***

***~~THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF THE LORD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.7)~~***

"I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses."

*Nothing conduces more to the production of true repentance than a view of the mercies of our God!* A sight of sin only, will often lead to despondency; or, if attended with a determination to seek for mercy, will never melt the soul into deep contrition. It is*the contrasted view of God's goodness, and of our own depravity*, that alone begets sincere shame and self-abasement. It is from thence alone, that we derive the complete knowledge of our own vileness, and are enabled to maintain a hope of acceptance with God, notwithstanding all our deservings of his wrath and indignation.

In the latter part of this chapter, and the whole of the next chapter, we have a confession, which seems to have been drawn up for the use of the Church, when they would be in captivity in Babylon. But the prayer itself begins with the words of our text; wherein we have an acknowledgment of God's unbounded goodness to his people; an acknowledgment, which is amplified and illustrated in the following verses by a variety of particulars. In this view it was an excellent preparation for that self-abasement which they were to express in the subsequent confession.

We shall find it a profitable subject for our present contemplation to consider the loving-kindness of our God to us; and that we may confine our thoughts within a proper limit, we shall show:

**I. What there is in the loving-kindness of our God, that deserves particular notice.**

It is obvious that the subject, taken in all its latitude, is absolutely inexhaustible! But by confining our attention to some prominent parts of it, we shall be enabled to form a just conception of the whole, without being distracted by too great a variety of particulars. Let us then notice,

***~~1. The freeness and sovereignty of God's loving-kindness.~~***

The freeness of God's mercies is that which constitutes their first and most distinguishing feature; without adverting to that, we can never have any just conception of them at all. If we suppose God to have any respect to human merit, and to confer his saving grace on account of men's merits—we undermine the principal foundations of our gratitude, and take honor to ourselves in exact proportion as we ought to give glory unto him!

But a very little reflection will suffice to show us that God is altogether sovereign in the distribution of his saving grace. Who made the difference between the apostate angels and fallen man? What was there in *us*, rather than in *them*, that induced God to provide a Savior for us, when no such mercy was given to them? Who has made the difference between the benighted heathen and ourselves? How have we merited that God should send us the light of the gospel, when they are left in spiritual darkness, and given up to follow their own delusions?

If we prosecute the same inquiry in relation to the distinctions visible among ourselves, we shall be constrained to come to the same conclusion, "By the grace of God we are what we are!" It is manifest, that still, as in former ages, "things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are now revealed unto babes;" and the only reason we can give for it, is that which our Lord himself assigned, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight! [Matthew 11:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.25-26). See also [Ezekiel 16:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.3-6)."

Whether therefore we look at our rank in society, our intellects, our bodily constitution, or our attainments in grace—we must confess, that it is "God, and God alone, who has made any of us to differ! [1 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.7)."

**2. The richness and variety** **of God's loving-kindness.**

Were we to attempt to enumerate particulars, we would not know where to begin, or where to end. The mercies we enjoy as men, in contradistinction to all the rest of the creation, are unspeakably great. Nor should we overlook those which we possess as Britons; but, above all, those *saving mercies*which we enjoy as Christians, deserve our most attentive consideration.

That we have a Savior to whom we may flee for refuge, and who is able and willing to save us to the uttermost; that we have the aids of the Holy Spirit promised to us for the renovating of our fallen nature; that the invitations and promises of the Gospel are yet sounding in our ears, when so many millions of our fellow-creatures have received their final doom, and are gone beyond a possibility of redemption! These things, I say, display in its brightest colors the loving-kindness of our God to us; and therefore we should meditate upon them day and night!

We have a striking pattern for our imitation in *Nehemiah*; he wished to impress the Jews with a sense of God's goodness to them, and therefore set it forth before them in a variety of most affecting particulars, [Nehemiah 9:7-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.7-15). Let us also, for the same end, recall to mind the mercies which we ourselves have experienced at his hands; and we shall find them countless as the sands upon the sea shore!

**3. The constancy and continuance** **of God's loving-kindness.**

After all, we scarcely know whether this is not the view in which the loving-kindness of our God appears to greatest advantage. This seemed to Nehemiah to be the crown and summit of God's mercies given to the Jewish nation, [Nehemiah 9:16-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.16-21); [Nehemiah 9:26-31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.26-31); and certainly not even the greatest of his mercies astonishes us more than the *continuance*of them to us.

Let us but reflect how numerous our provocations have been, and what ungrateful returns we have made to God for all his loving-kindness, and we shall stand amazed at his patience, and long-suffering, and forbearance; we shall be surprised that he has not long since shut up his tender mercies in displeasure, and "sworn, in his wrath, that we should not enter into his rest." We shall then understand (what else is quite inexplicable) why David, in a Psalm of only twenty-six verses, repeats no less than twenty-six times that "God's mercy endures forever! Psalms 136" We shall see that to God's continual mercy, and to this alone, we owe it, that we have not been consumed long ago! [Lamentations 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lam 3.22).

Let us proceed to consider,

***~~II. In what manner, and for what ends, we should notice the loving-kindness of our God.~~***

**1. The manner of God's loving-kindness**.

A mere speculative view of this subject is by no means that which befits us. We should consider it with the profoundest *admiration*, and the liveliest *gratitude*.

One might as well expect a person to speak in a light manner of sin, as of the mercies of his God. There is something so vast and incomprehensible in the loving-kindness of God, that the very thought of it should utterly overwhelm us. The exclamation of Paul, when contemplating the decrees of Providence respecting the calling of the Gentiles, and the restoration of the Jews, is that which suits us in reference to the subject before us, "O the depth! O the depth! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.33)."

Even a heathen, when restored to the exercise of his understanding, was so amazed at the goodness of Jehovah, that he exclaimed, "How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders, [Daniel 4:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.2-3)." How much more then ought *we*to be impressed with it, to whom it is revealed in the stupendous work of redemption! Surely the meditation of the prophet should be ever on our mind, and his words upon our lips, "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty! [Zechariah 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 9.17)."

Yet, as the angels, who veil their faces and their feet before God from a sense of their unworthiness to behold or serve him, do yet exert themselves to the utmost to exalt his name; so we, however incapable of comprehending fully the mercies of our God, should do our utmost to praise and glorify him on account of them. David stirred up "his soul, and all that was within him, to bless the Lord, who had crowned him with mercy and loving-kindness! [Psalm 103:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.1-4)." And we are taught by the prophet the precise terms, as it were, in which it befits us to express our gratitude to God, [Isaiah 12:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.4-6). The very words of our text may serve to show us in what manner our admiration and gratitude should be combined; if I may so speak, our admiration should be lively, and our gratitude profound.

***~~2. The ends of God's loving-kindness.~~***

No other meditation, no subject of discourse, more imperiously demands your notice than this. You should reflect upon, and "mention" the loving-kindness of God, both for the instruction of others, and the encouragement of your own souls.

How are others to become acquainted with God, if you, whose understandings are enlightened, do not endeavor to instruct them? Or to what purpose has God imparted to you the knowledge of himself, if you do not impart it to those around you? "Your light is not to be hidden under a bushel, but to be put on a lampstand," that it may be a source of benefit to others. It is the command of God that his mercies should be thus treasured up in the minds of all, and be transmitted by oral testimony from generation to generation, [Psalm 78:2-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.2-7). And the more truly any people have been devoted to God themselves, the more active and exemplary they have been in making him known to others, [Psalm 145:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.1-8).

And what can be such a source of encouragement to yourselves? There is nothing like this to encourage you to pray, "the goodness of God is revealed on purpose to lead you to repentance, [Romans 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.4)," and to animate your petitions at the throne of grace, [Psalm 51:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.1); [Psalm 69:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 69.16-17).

What can so embolden you to trust in God? Were you to contemplate nothing but his power, you might be filled with dread, rather than with confidence; but when you consider his *goodness*also, your hopes of mercy are strengthened, and you are led to commit yourselves to his fatherly protection, [Psalm 36:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.7).

Surely also there cannot be found any stronger inducement to serve him. "What shall I render unto the Lord?" is the natural question that must arise in the bosom of every one that feels his obligations to the Lord, [Psalm 63:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 63.3); and if we did not "serve the Lord with gladness and joyfulness of heart for the abundance of the mercies" which he has given unto us, we should be filled with self-reproach, and be constrained to acknowledge ourselves deserving of the heaviest condemnation, [Deuteronomy 28:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 28.45); [Deuteronomy 28:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 28.47).

***~~Behold now, what matter there is:~~***

***~~1. For reproof.~~***

Is it not surprising, that, surrounded as we are with the mercies and loving-kindness of our God, we should be so insensible of all his goodness? Let us blush for our ingratitude! Let us strive henceforth so to "think of his loving-kindness," that we may say with David, "Your loving-kindness, O God, is ever before my eyes! [Psalm 26:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 26.3); [Psalm 48:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 48.9)." Yes, "let us praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works unto the children of men! [Psalm 107:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.8); [Psalm 107:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.15); [Psalm 107:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.21); [Psalm 107:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.31)." If we will but contemplate his *acts*, we shall soon become acquainted with his *love*, [Psalm 107:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 107.43).

***~~2. For encouragement.~~***

What do we mean by entertaining hard thoughts of God, or doubting his willingness to accept and bless us? His very nature is love, [1 John 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 4.8); and all his acts, though often misapprehended by us, are love also.

Be it so, our sins have so abounded, that we seem almost beyond the reach of mercy, "but where sin has abounded, his grace shall much more abound! [Romans 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.20)." And if we will only go and "remind him of his loving-kindnesses which has been ever of old," we shall find that our plea is absolutely irresistible! [Psalm 25:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.6-7); [Psalm 25:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 25.11).

***~~#1014~~***

***~~VEXING THE HOLY SPIRIT~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.8), [10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah 63.10)~~***

"He said: 'Surely they are my people, children that will not lie;' so he was their Savior."

"But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."

We all notice with wonder the perverseness of the Jewish people, and justify in our minds the judgments inflicted on them. But it would be well, if, when looking at them, we beheld our own selves, as in a looking-glass; for truly *the whole of their conduct is but a just representation of our own*. The expectations which God formed respecting them were such as were perfectly just and reasonable; and when he was so grievously disappointed, we wonder not that he resented it in the way he did.

We shall find it profitable to consider this passage:

***~~I. As fulfilled in the Jewish people.~~***

***~~God's expectations from them were reasonable.~~***

The mercies which he had given to them, when "he took them for his own special people," are well known. They are again and again specified in the Holy Scriptures. See [Nehemiah 9:7-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.7-25). In particular, he revealed to them his laws from Heaven, [Nehemiah 9:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.13), yes, and "gave his Holy Spirit also to instruct them, [Nehemiah 9:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.20)." In doing these things, he said, "Surely they are my people, that will not lie." They will be to me a special people; they will love, and serve, and honor me; and nothing will ever induce them to depart from me.

This, I say, was nothing more than what his mercies towards them most plainly called for. Never had any nation under Heaven been dealt with as they had been, [Deuteronomy 4:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.7-8); [Deuteronomy 4:32-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.32-35); and therefore he might reasonably expect that they would requite him according to the mercies given unto them.

***~~But they most grievously disappointed him.~~***

"They soon forgot his works, and were disobedient to him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Their whole conduct was one continued series of murmurings and rebellions; as Moses himself testified, "You have been rebellious from the day that I knew you! [Deuteronomy 9:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.7); [Deuteronomy 9:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 9.22-24)."

Nor was it in the wilderness only that they thus grieved and vexed him. When they were brought into Canaan, they still continued to be a stiff-necked and rebellious people; insomuch that God himself was "broken with their whorish heart, [Ezekiel 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 6.9);" and "was pressed under them, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, [Amos 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 2.13)." Thus they proceeded, until at last they filled up the measure of their iniquities, in the murder of their Messiah!

***~~His resentment against them, therefore, was most just.~~***

In the *wilderness*they so provoked him to anger, that of the whole number who were above twenty years of age at the time of their coming out of Egypt, only two were allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

In *Canaan*, too, he was constrained in like manner to punish their descendants also with the severest judgments, insomuch that on some occasions "his own soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." But all his chastisements proved ineffectual for their permanent reformation; so that he delivered them up, first into the hands of the Chaldeans, and in process of time into the hands of the Romans; and has now, for these eighteen hundred years, made them a spectacle to the whole world, a solemn monument of his righteous indignation.

But why are these things related concerning them? Surely for our sakes. It will therefore be proper for us to consider them,

**II. As recorded for our instruction.**

The whole history is declared by Paul to have been written as an admonition to us, [1 Corinthians 10:1-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.1-11). Let me then ask,

***~~Has not God been disappointed in us?~~***

The mercies given to the Jews were nothing more than *shadows*of the blessings which we enjoy. What was their redemption, in comparison with ours?

What their support in the wilderness, and their possession of the land of Canaan—in comparison with the spiritual food administered to us, and the glory kept in reserve for us?

Were the Jews a favored nation in comparison with the Gentiles? What then are we in comparison with the Heathen world? Yes, and in comparison with a great part of the Christian world too?

How fully and faithfully is the Gospel ministered to you! I may truly say, as Paul did to the Galatians, that "Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified before your eyes!"

What, then, must have been God's expectations respecting you? Surely of you he has said, 'They will walk before me as dear children. They will never lie. I can depend on them. Whoever may neglect me, they will not. Whoever may disobey me, they will not. I have given myself to them, to be their Savior; and they will feel their obligations, and surrender up their whole souls to me, to be saved in the way of my appointments.'

But how have you fulfilled these expectations?

Has he seen you devoting yourselves to him in sincerity and truth?

Has he not seen you, on the contrary, weary of his service, and *going for happiness to an ensnaring world?*

Has he not seen you indulging many hidden abominations, and yielding to unhallowed tempers; and either neglecting altogether, or performing in a mere heartless and formal way, your duties of prayer and praise?

***~~May we not then well expect that his anger should be kindled against us?~~***

Yes, truly; such conduct cannot but "grieve" and "vex his Holy Spirit;" and he might well swear concerning the greater part of us, as he did respecting the Jews, that "we shall never enter into his rest!" And what if he should do so? What if, instead of being to us a "Savior," he should become our "enemy;" and all "his love and pity should be turned to wrath and fiery indignation? Can we bear the thought?

Reflect, I beg you, my brethren, what "an evil and bitter thing it will be to fall into the hands of the living God!" Yet can we expect no other, than that he should be thus incensed, when we are multiplying our rebellions against him, and "trampling under foot his dear Son, and doing despite to his Spirit of grace." He has told us, that "we shall reap according as we sow; if we will sow to the flesh, we must of the flesh reap corruption; but if we will sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting!"

***~~#1015~~***

***~~THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9)~~***

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old."

Among those who have the Gospel fully opened to them, the history of the Jews must of necessity be familiar. Yet, however familiar it is to our minds, we need to have it frequently brought to our remembrance, since it exhibits with unrivaled clearness *the dispensations of God's providence, and shadows forth with most astonishing exactness the wonders of his grace*.

The words which we have just read may be considered as a kind of summary of that history. In them are recorded:  
God's tender compassion towards his people, while they were groaning under the yoke of Pharaoh;  
the means he used for their deliverance, by sending an angel, the Angel of the Covenant, his only dear Son, to bring them forth from Egypt;  
the success of those means in their complete redemption;  
and his continued care over them during the whole period of their sojourning in the wilderness.

We might, not unprofitably, enter into a particular consideration of all these events, and take occasion from them to adore the power and faithfulness of Jehovah; but we propose rather to turn your attention to the mercies given unto ourselves; and we would lead you to notice:

***~~I. His tender compassion towards ourselves.~~***

Even in our unconverted state  
he looks on us with an eye of pity; compare [Exodus 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.7) with [Hosea 11:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 11.7-9),  
longing for our return, [Jeremiah 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 13.27),  
and following us with invitations to accept of mercy, [Ezekiel 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 33.11).

But the very instant we begin to feel the burden of our sins, and to mourn over them, all the tenderest emotions of love are excited in his bosom, and he flies, as it were, to raise us from our depression, and to comfort us in our sorrows! [Luke 15:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.20). *Every sigh and groan enters into his ears, and every tear is treasured up in his vials!* See that beautiful representation of his love, [Jeremiah 31:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.18); [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20).

We pass over his *sympathy*with us under all our subsequent trials, because that will be more advantageously noticed in another part of our discourse; and we proceed to notice,

***~~II. The wonderful deliverance he grants unto us.~~***

The angel by whom God saved the Church in the wilderness, is the same as he still employs for our salvation. Compare [Exodus 3:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.1-6); [Exodus 3:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 3.13-14) with [Acts 7:30-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.30-34). Even "the Messenger of the Covenant [Malachi 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.1)," the Lord Jesus Christ! [1 Corinthians 10:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.9). He has sent that divine person to "redeem us," not by power only, but by price, even the inestimable price of his own blood! [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19). [Revelation 5:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.9).

To what must we ascribe this stupendous gift?

Was it bestowed on account of any merit in us, either that God had already seen, or that he foresaw as hereafter to exist? No! It was to "his love and pity" alone that we are indebted, either for his first gift of his Son to redeem us, or for his Spirit's application of that redemption to our souls. "He loved us, because he would love us, [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 7.7-8);" and to his free and sovereign grace must all the glory be ascribed, by all the hosts of his redeemed forever and ever!

But our obligation to his love and pity are best seen in,

***~~III. The continued care with which he watches over us.~~***

Exceedingly beautiful is the description given of his attention to his people in the wilderness, [Deuteronomy 32:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.10-12); and justly may it be considered as illustrating the care which he takes of us. See [Isaiah 40:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.11); [Isaiah 46:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 46.3-4).

There is not any state in which his eye is not upon us for good. Are we assaulted by persecution or temptation? He stands ready to support us with grace sufficient for us, and to make us "more than conquerors" over all. Every returning want he will supply, [Isaiah 33:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.16); [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18), and "keep us by his power through faith unto everlasting salvation, [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who are the Lord's only in name and profession.~~***

Such, alas! were the great mass of those who came out of Egypt; and therefore they were left to perish in the wilderness. This is particularly specified in the words following our text, verse 10; and the same fate will befall us also, if we do not give up ourselves to God in a way of holy obedience, [Exodus 23:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 23.20-21) with [Matthew 7:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.21).

***~~2. Those who are his indeed and in truth.~~***

Two things we wish you ever to bear in mind; namely, your privileges, and your obligations.

As for your privileges, what tongue can ever declare them, what finite understanding can ever fully apprehend them? O remember "the Rock from whence you are hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence you are dug," and let the wonders of redemption be your meditation day and night.

Consider too your obligations. "What manner of people ought you to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" Surely, "having been bought with so great a price, you should ever glorify your God with your body and your spirit, which are his! [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)."

***~~#1016~~***

***~~GOD CONTEMPLATED~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.11-14)~~***

KJV. "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where in He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is He who put his Holy Spirit within him? that led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? that led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so did you lead your people, in make yourself a glorious name."

NIV. "Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name."

These are supposed, by some, to be the words of Jehovah; but they seem rather to be spoken by Israel, who, under the chastisements of the Most High, were brought to a measure of penitential reflection. Such was the effect which God designed to produce upon them, [Jeremiah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.4). And he complained when his judgments did not operate thus favorably upon their minds, [Jeremiah 2:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.5-7), which precisely accords with the text.

A review of former mercies is at all times very desirable, as well for our own comfort as for God's glory. I would therefore now call upon you to contemplate the Most High God:

***~~I. In a way of grateful recollection.~~***

***~~The wonders wrought for Israel, in their redemption from Egypt, are here recounted.~~***

Here they record their passage through the Red Sea, and the special influences of the Spirit of God upon Moses and the elders, during their sojourning in the *wilderness*, and their final rest in *Canaan*, the promised land. Repeatedly is every one of these mercies specified in my text. Thrice is a passage through the sea mentioned; with this particular circumstance, that, whereas the bottom of the sea is for the most part rough and rugged, it was so smoothed for them, that the whole nation, men, women, children, and all their cattle, were enabled to pass it "without stumbling," and with the same facility as a horse moves in the open field.

Twice also is the Holy Spirit mentioned, as exerting his all-powerful influence on the minds of their leaders, so as to conduct them in the safest way, and to the greatest possible advantage.

Their final rest in Canaan is also illustrated by a beautiful simile of cattle, which, after all their labors, descend into a fertile valley, and, under the eye of his master, enjoy in the greatest perfection such provision and rest as their necessities require.

These things formed the principal theme of praise and thanksgiving to that people in all ages. After their return from Babylon, Nehemiah expatiated upon them with adoring gratitude, [Nehemiah 9:5-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Neh 9.5-25); and to this hour they are deservedly the great subject of that nation's boast.

***~~Nor are they less interesting to us than to the Jews themselves.~~***

In these manifestations of God's power and grace, we see far more than in any description of God that could be given us. Here we see Jehovah in action, if I may so speak. Every one of his perfections is here painted, as it were, to the very life. Whatever expressions might be used to characterize his condescension and love, we could not form so just a conception of him as from this history.

Behold his sovereignty, in choosing a people so unworthy of his love!

Behold his power, in bringing them forth from the midst of such a powerful nation, that were determined to retain them in their bondage!

Behold his care over them for the space of forty years, providing for their every want!

Behold his truth and faithfulness, in bringing them at last into the promised land!

And is he not the same God now?

Or will he do less for his people now?

Or rather, will he not do at this time for the souls of his people as much as he then did for their bodies?

I say, these manifestations of his power and grace deserve to be reviewed by us, no less than by the Jews themselves; and we suffer great loss, in not calling them more frequently and more gratefully to our remembrance.

But let us contemplate him more especially,

***~~II. In a way of affectionate inquiry.~~***

Twice is the inquiry made, "Where is he?"

This inquiry should be made by us:

***~~1. That we may obtain similar mercies at his hands.~~***

We need, in fact, the very same mercies as were given to the Jews of old.

Are not we also in bondage? And can anything less than Omnipotence deliver us?

Are there not also seas of difficulty before us, through which we need to be brought by the spiritual influence of Heaven?

Do we not need the Holy Spirit also, to instruct and guide us in all our way, and to accomplish in us and for us all the good pleasure of our God?

Do we not need the same provision also for our daily needs?

Do we not need that rest which remains for us in the Canaan above?

Yes, in truth; all that was given to Israel of old, is a type, and not a type only, but a pledge also, of what shall be given to us, it only we commit ourselves, like Israel of old, to the guidance and protection of our God! See [Psalm 77:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.5); [Psalm 77:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.11-13); [Psalm 77:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.19-20).

Inquire, then, I beg you, "Where is this God?" "Where is He" who did these wonders for his people of old; that we may supplicate his favor, and have them renewed to us?

***~~2. That we may render to him the honor due unto his name.~~***

This also is twice mentioned, as God's peculiar design in all that he wrought for Israel of old. And surely it should be a primary motive with us in contemplating all which he did for *them*, and all that he has done for *us* also, in that more wonderful redemption which he has accomplished for us through the Son of his love. Methinks our hearts should be full of gratitude!

We should never forget it for a single moment.

We should be speaking of it every day, and all the day long.

We should never be contented to remain at a distance from him.

In attending upon the public ordinances, we should go in this spirit, "Where is he?" 'I want to find my God; I want to praise him for all his tender mercies; and to adore him for all the wonders of his love.'

In our secret chamber, too, this should be our one desire; nor should we be ever satisfied, until we can say, with the Church of old, "I have found Him whom my soul loves! [Song of Solomon 3:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 3.3-4)."

The constant habit of our mind, whether in public or private, should be, "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed upon us; and the great goodness toward the house of Israel that he has bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, verse 7."

***~~See, then, brethren,~~***

***~~1. What improvement to make of your troubles.~~***

*They are sent in order to bring you near unto God!* [Hosea 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 5.15); [Hosea 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.14); [Hosea 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.16). If they produce this effect, you will have reason to bless God for them to all eternity!

Be careful, however, that these impressions do not pass away with the occasion that calls them forth. Alas! our better feelings too often prove but transient, See [Psalm 78:34-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.34-37). And then, like metal taken from the furnace, we become only the more obdurate. But "we hope better things of you;" and that you will be able to attest that *your trials have only quickened your desires after God, and rendered you more thankful for all the mercies that have been given unto you*.

***~~2. What to expect at the hands of God.~~***

See, in the text, Elijah's mantle; and take it up; and, with an impassable river before you, strike the waters in faith, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah? [2 Kings 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 2.14)." See how the Church of old acted in the extremity of her trouble, "Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old. Was it not you who cut Rahab (Egypt) to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over? [Isaiah 51:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.9-10)."

Thus you may expect your greatest obstacles to be made the very means of your preservation. Only picture to yourselves the weary cattle feeding or reclining in the fertile valley; and there you have the perfect image of what shall be done for you, when once your appointed labors shall be ended; you shall then "rest forever from your labors," and enjoy perfect peace in the bosom of your God!

***~~#1017~~***

***~~PLEADING WITH GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 63:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.15-16)~~***

KJV. "Look down from Heaven, and behold from the habitation of your holiness and of your glory; where is your zeal and your strength, the sounding of your affections and of your mercies towards me? Are they restrained? Doubtless you are our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; your name is from everlasting.

NIV. "Look down from Heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us. But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name."

Behold a suppliant in the presence of his God. Draw near, my brethren; and hear his pleadings at the throne of grace. Surely from this you may learn much of the condescension of your God, who allows himself to be so addressed; and much of your own exalted privileges, in that, in*every time of need, you have such a God, before whom you can spread your needs, and from whom you can obtain whatever your necessities may require*.

The words before us may be supposed to be uttered by a pious Jew, mourning over the desolation of his country during the Babylonian captivity, and pleading with God for a restoration of the blessings which it was once the high privilege of his nation to enjoy.

The whole of the Jews' captivity in Babylon, and of their redemption from it, was of a *typical*nature; and may well be considered as *prefiguring the trials and deliverances of God's people in all ages*. Paul quotes a part of this prayer, in this very view; and shows that the things here implored were not confined to that particular occasion, but have their accomplishment under the Christian dispensation. Compare chapter 64:4 with [1 Corinthians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9). I may well, therefore, lead you to consider,

***~~I. To what circumstances God's people may be reduced.~~***

The whole Bible attests, that God's people are more or less "a poor and afflicted people, [Zephaniah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.12)."

**They are exposed, like others, to TEMPORAL afflictions.**

They have no exemption from troubles, either personal or domestic. Disease, with all its attendant evils, will press on them as well as others; and the loss of dear relatives will be felt by them as keenly as by any others. And especially if there be misconduct in their offspring, it will be more acute and pungent in them, in proportion as they feel the value of their own souls, and are concerned for the souls of those connected with them.

In addition to the common calamities of life, they have also some as arising from piety itself. For who ever followed the Lord fully without having a cross to bear? We are told, that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution!" And so we find it in actual experience. From the time of Abel to the present hour, there has not been one who was "really born after the Spirit who has not been hated and persecuted by those who have been born only after the flesh, [Galatians 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 4.20)."

***~~To SPIRITUAL troubles, also, they are subjected in a great degree.~~***

At their first turning to the Lord, they are frequently bowed down under such a load of guilt as makes them apprehensive that they shall never find acceptance with their offended God. And, at subsequent periods also, they are often "in heaviness, through manifold temptations." Satan, their malignant adversary, harasses them with his assaults; and with his fiery darts inflicts a wound upon their inmost souls! [Ephesians 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.16).

Sometimes, too, they are made to experience the *hidings of God's face*, and to fear that he has utterly withdrawn his loving-kindness from them, [Psalm 77:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.2-3); [Psalm 77:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 77.7-9). In comparison with this, all other troubles are light, "The spirit of a man may sustain any common infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Even our blessed Lord, who uttered no complaint on account of any other sufferings, cried out by reason of this, "My God, my God! why have you forsaken me?"

But in my text we see,

***~~II. To whom we should betake ourselves, under such circumstances.~~***

James says, "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray!"*Prayer is the great antidote to affliction of every kind!*And here we see in what way we should approach our God.

***~~1. We should draw near to God in a way of humble expostulation.~~***

Expostulation, if devoid of humility, would be most offensive to God; for "God gives not account of any of his matters;" and to call him to our bar of judgment, would be presumption in the extreme. Yet God is pleased to allow us to approach him, and even to expostulate with him, provided we come to him with real humility and contrition. Though he dwells in the high and holy place—yet he will regard the cry of the poor destitute; and "from the habitation of his holiness and his glory" supply his every need. He has a zeal for his people's good; he has said, that "he will assuredly plant them in the heavenly land, with his whole heart and with his whole soul, [Jeremiah 32:40-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 32.40-41)." *He feels for them, too, as a tender parent for his child under some great calamity*. His whole soul is in a state of commotion on their account, [Hosea 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 11.8). [Jeremiah 31:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 31.20).

But, if we are under circumstances of distress, without any immediate relief from him, he will appear to have "forsaken and forgotten us." On those occasions, therefore, he permits us to address him in the language of expostulation, "Look down from Heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious. Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from me. Are they restrained?" Yes; not only will he approve of such holy importunity, but he will never allow such prayers to ascend in vain! [Psalm 42:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 42.9-11).

**2. We should draw near to God in a way of confident trust.**

There are times and seasons when a person, who is on the whole pious, may, by reason of his trials, seem to be abandoned by his God, and scarcely be recognized as having the divine image enstamped upon him. Thus it was with Job, under his heavy and accumulated calamities. But a person should not, therefore, cast away his confidence; but rather hold it the firmer, that it may afford him consolation and support under the pressure of his troubles. He may, in addition to his expostulations with God, lay hold upon him under the endearing relation of a *Father*, "But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name."

A person may have an evidence in his own soul that he has been adopted by God, yes, and has been born of him; he may be sure, in his own mind, that he has been redeemed from death and Hell, and been brought into the light and liberty of God's children; and he may look to God as one whose "name is from everlasting," and who will approve himself to be "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

O! what consolation will flow into the soul from this recognition of God's relation to us in our low estate! I say, brethren, "hold fast this rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end;" and you will find, that with this anchor fixed within the veil, you will outride the storm, and be brought in safety to the desired haven.

***~~Let me, in conclusion, ask,~~***

***~~1. What do you know experimentally of this method of pleading with God?~~***

*Our pulse does not so clearly mark the state of our bodies, as our prayers mark the state of our souls.*Many, in their whole lives, have never thus expostulated with God; or held fast their relation to him, as their plea for mercy. In fact, the generality of Christians would account this to be the most insufferable presumption. But I call on you, under all trials to which you can over be reduced, to "encourage yourselves in the Lord your God;" and, like Israel of old, to wrestle with him in prayer, until you have obtained the desired blessing.

***~~2. What warrant have you for the confidence which such expostulations imply?~~***

Before you can say with truth, "Doubtless, you are our Father, and our Redeemer," you must have experienced the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; and must have fled to Christ for refuge, as your only hope. Others, indeed, may not have noticed in you this change, so as fully to recognize you under your new character; but you must be deeply conscious of the secret exercises of your soul before God; and must be able to appeal to the heart-searching God, that you have thus sought mercy at his hands.

Tell me then, brethren, whether you can thus appeal to God? And, if your conscience testifies against you, that you are yet unregenerate, and without a saving interest in Christ, let your trials be regarded by you as messengers from the Most High, to call you into a state of reconciliation with him, and to save you from the troubles that shall never end.

***~~#1018~~***

***~~IMPERFECTION OF OUR BEST SERVICES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6)~~***

"We are all as an impure thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!"

*Humility is that grace which is most suited to our condition as sinful creatures*; and, that we may be assisted in the pursuit of it, God has graciously given us, not only promises for our encouragement, but patterns for our imitation, and models for our use.

We cannot have any more instructive *pattern*than that which is exhibited in the repenting publican, or in the returning prodigal.

Of *models*, that which David has left us, in the fifty-first Psalm, is perhaps the most distinguished, and bf most general utility; but that which is contained in this, and part of the preceding, chapter, excepting only some few expressions, is almost equally applicable to the Christian world. The whole of it is a prayer drawn up by the prophet for the use of the Jews, when they should be in captivity in Babylon. We shall not enter into it at large, but shall confine our attention to the passage which we have just read, which most justly describes our state before God.

***~~I. Our state before God, in general terms.~~***

There were many things considered as impure under the Jewish dispensation; and whoever touched them was deemed impure; and, until he had been purified according to the law, he was kept both from the house of God and from all his fellow-creatures, lest he should communicate to others the defilement which he had contracted. Hence, when the prophet says, "We are all as an impure thing," he must be understood to say:

**1. We are impure in ourselves.**

Who can look inward for one moment, and not confess this melancholy truth?

**2. We are defiling to others.**

The whole of our fellowship with each other tends to foster some vile affection, some "earthly, sensual, or devilish" inclination.

***~~3. We are in a state of separation from God.~~***

We have by nature no delight in God; we are averse to his service, his worship, his people; our "carnal minds are enmity against him," and against everything that leads to him, or sets him before our eyes; We "say continually in our hearts, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of your ways."

As wretched as our state appears from this representation, the prophet sets it forth in a far more humiliating view.

***~~II. Our state before God, by a particular comparison.~~***

In the former clause of the text the prophet speaks of us as we are on the whole; but in the latter part he speaks of our "righteousnesses" only; and these he compares to a leprous garment, which by God's express command was to be consigned to the flames. The truth of this comparison appears, in that:

***~~1. All of our best deeds are DEFECTIVE.~~***

If we measure them by a standard of our own, we may discern no flaw in them; but the perfect law of God is that by which they must be tried; and where has there been one action of our lives that has fully come up to that standard? We are required to love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul, and all our strength; and our neighbor as ourselves; but what duty that we ever performed to God or man will stand this test? Hence we must confess, that*everything we have done has been impure in the sight of God*.

**2.** **All of our best deeds are MIXED WITH SIN.**

Pride and self-righteousness cleave to us as long as we are in an unconverted state; and the more exemplary our conduct is, the more it calls forth, and seems to justify, those hateful propensities. Let the most moral person look into his own heart, and see whether, instead of being filled with self-loathing and self-abhorrence on account of his defects, he does not find pride and self-delight arising in his heart, and prompting him to say, like the elated Pharisee, "I thank you, O God, that I am not as other men." Now this is a fly, that would render the most precious ointment offensive! [Ecclesiastes 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eccles 10.1).

While such a disposition as this is harbored in our hearts, we, and all that we do, must be hateful in the sight of God, and render us fit only to be cast, as most abhorred objects, into the fire of Hell! See [Leviticus 13:47-58](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 13.47-58), but especially verse 55, where it was appointed, that though the plague had not spread, or changed its color—yet if it had eaten off the nap from the cloth, the cloth was to be burned, because it was impure on the *inside*. So, though the whole conduct of a man is not polluted, or even visibly bad in any part—yet if then be an inward disposition that is depraved, our great High Priest, when he shall inspect our hearts, will certainly pronounce us leprous, and execute the penalty of the law upon us.

***~~This subject may be improved for,~~***

***~~1. Our conviction.~~***

We are very backward to acknowledge ourselves to be so depraved as we really are. But this declaration of God is sufficient to humble the proudest heart. It is not only *atrocious*sinners who are thus vile, but "all"—all without exception. Nor are our worst actions only thus defiled, but all, even our best, "all our *righteousnesses*are as filthy rags." Let all then, without exception, humble themselves as "impure, [Isaiah 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 6.5)," and "vile, [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 40.4)," and altogether destitute of anything that is good, [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18).

***~~2. Our direction.~~***

Our own righteousness must be wholly renounced; and all of us must enter into the kingdom of Heaven on the very same footing as publicans and harlots! This is humiliating to our proud nature; but it must be done; for, if it would be unseemly to introduce to an earthly monarch his bride clothed in "filthy rags," much more would it be so to present our souls to the heavenly Bridegroom clad in such polluted garments as ours.

Paul himself felt the necessity of a better righteousness than his own, [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9); and, if ever we would find acceptance with God, we must seek it altogether through the righteousness of Christ!

***~~3. Our comfort.~~***

We need not be dejected on account of the foregoing representation; since there is a righteousness offered to us in the Gospel—even "the righteousness of Christ, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe, [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22)." This is commensurate with our needs; it is absolutely perfect; and it was wrought out by Him, [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24), in order that we might be clad in it, and "that the shame of our nakedness might not appear! [Revelation 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.18)."

Rejoice therefore all you who are conscious of your own depravity, and pray to God that "Christ may be made righteousness unto you, [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30);" and that you, both in time and in eternity, may glory in him as "the Lord your righteousness! [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 23.6)."

***~~#1019~~***

***~~THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING PRAYER~~***

***~~[Isaiah 64:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.7)~~***

"There is none that calls upon your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of you; therefore you have hidden your face from us."

Man is encompassed with *dangers*from which no human foresight can deliver him. He is oppressed with *needs*which no creature can supply. It is to God that he must look for the blessings which he needs. But he is naturally so averse to prayer, that he will bear all his own burdens rather than apply to God for relief. On this account it is that so many faint under their afflictions; and this was the ground of God's controversy with his people.

***~~I. The nature of prayer.~~***

Prayer is represented in the Scriptures by a variety of expressions. It is here set forth under the idea of "calling upon God."

Petitions, either with or without a form, are not worthy the name of prayer—if they are unattended with a devout spirit. *Prayer is a work of the heart rather than of the lips; it supposes that we feel our needs, desire to have them supplied, and believe that God is able and willing to relieve them.*

***~~It is also described as a "taking hold of God."~~***

God has set himself, as it were, before us in the promises. There we may lay hold on him by faith; we may address him as the patriarch of old, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

[Genesis 32:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 32.26)." And this is the means prescribed by God for the attainment of his blessings, [Isaiah 27:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.5).

***~~It is further called a "stirring up of oneself" to lay hold on God.~~***

It is no easy thing to gain access to God in prayer. We engage in prayer for the most part with much reluctance. Our thoughts wander, before we are aware, and in spite of our endeavors to fix them. We seem to lose the accustomed energy of our minds. We need again and again to stir up our sluggish hearts.

When we consider prayer in this light, we shall see reason to lament,

***~~II. The general neglect of prayer.~~***

**Many live entirely without prayer.**

They are wholly occupied with worldly concerns. They are not sensible of their spiritual needs. They rely on their own industry for temporal advancement. They do not acknowledge to God, either their sins or their spiritual necessities.

***~~Others only occasionally lift up their hearts to Heaven.~~***

They will cry under the pressure of some heavy affliction, [Isaiah 26:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 26.16). But they resemble those spoken of by the prophet in [Hosea 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 7.14). Like metal removed from the fire, they soon return to their former hardness, [Psalm 78:34-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.34-37). After some signal deliverance, they will praise God; but, like the Israelites, they will soon forget his mercies! [Psalm 106:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 106.11-13).

***~~Some will maintain external forms of prayer.~~***

They will repeat their accustomed form at stated seasons, or they will offer a few general and cold petitions; and with this outward act they will rest satisfied. *They feel no pleasure in the duty, but perform it as a task.*

***~~But there are few indeed, who pray to God aright.~~***

There is a *remnant*now, as there was in the prophet's days, [Isaiah 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 8.18). The prophet certainly did not mean to include them in his censure. There are some who "stir up their souls to lay hold on God." But these are few when compared with the bulk of mankind; they may be said comparatively to be "none" at all.

To counteract this evil, we proceed to set forth:

***~~III. The consequences of neglect of prayer.~~***

The tokens of God's displeasure, which those in the text experienced, will be experienced by all who neglect prayer. God will surely "hide his face from them."

**He will not reveal his glory to them.**

He reveals himself to his people as he does not unto the world, [John 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.22); he shines into their hearts to discover to them his glory. But he will grant no such mercy to those who call not upon him. His perfections are to them rather an object of terror, than of admiration.

**He will not manifest his love** **to them.**

He often "sheds abroad his love in the hearts" of those who seek him, but the neglecters of prayer know nothing of their joy. They are strangers to the spirit of adoption; they rather banish God from their thoughts, and wish like the fool, that there were "no God!" [Psalm 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 14.1).

***~~He will not communicate his blessings to them.~~***

*His faithful worshipers have all the blessings of grace and glory.* But others have no part or lot with them. The blessings they do enjoy an turned into a curse unto them; and to eternity they must ascribe their misery to their own neglect. If all the souls that an banished from the Divine presence were asked, "Why has God hidden his face from you?" they must assign the reason that is given in the text.

***~~APPLICATION.~~***

***~~Those who live without prayer, should consider these things.~~***

This offence has been awfully marked by the indignation of God, [Psalm 81:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 81.10-12). "God gave them up;" to what? to their enemies? to death? or to immediate and eternal condemnation? No; to what was worse than even that—"their own hearts' lust!" that they might "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." How bitter must be the reflections of those who perish through this neglect! Surely all should seek the Lord while he may be found.

***~~They also, who are formal in prayer, should lay them to heart.~~***

These, as being more liable to deceive themselves, are in greater danger. *Our prayers must be fervent in order to be effectual*,[James 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 5.16). If we would enter into Heaven, we must press into it with violence, [Matthew 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.12).

***~~Nor should this subject ever be forgotten by those who profess godliness.~~***

Unless we stir up ourselves continually, we shall soon lose the Divine presence. We cannot guard too much against *formality in prayer*. Let us be encouraged by God's gracious declaration, [Proverbs 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 15.8). *God is not more pleased with the songs of angels, than with the sighs and groans of a contrite soul!*

***~~#1020~~***

***~~DANGER OF DISREGARDING GOD~~***

***~~[Isaiah 65:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.12-14)~~***

KJV. "Because when I called, you did not answer; when T spoke, you did not hear; but did evil before my eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not; therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

NIV. "I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit."

In every age, and every place, God is the same; he is the Governor of the universe, and expects obedience from all his creatures, and will deal with them in a way of approbation or displeasure, according as they conduct themselves towards him. Whatever his people do, either in a way of obedience or of disobedience, he will notice it, in order to a suitable retribution; taking into the account everything which, on the one hand, may either extenuate or aggravate the guilt of the disobedient, or, on the other hand, enhance or detract from the services of the obedient. This is evident in the passage before us, where he specifies his own unwearied kindness to his people as greatly aggravating the guilt of their neglect, and as forming a ground for his executing the heavier judgments upon them.

Let us consider,

***~~I. The evil laid to their charge.~~***

This was indeed heinous beyond measure; for, notwithstanding all the remonstrances of successive prophets whom God sent to warn them of their guilt, "they forsook the Lord, and forgot his holy mountain," where they ought to have worshiped him; and "offered sacrifices to a whole troop" of worthless idols.

In this respect we, through mercy, stand on higher ground than they. Yet, *though free from gross idolatry, we have acted altogether on the same rebellious principle as they*, in that,

***~~1. We have followed, every one of us, our own evil ways.~~***

We have not all acted in precisely the same way; some have run into the grosser sins of drunkenness and impurity, while others have been more decorous in their habits of life; but we have all neglected to choose the things wherein God delighted, and have "chosen the things wherein he delighted not." To fear him, to love him, to serve him, to glorify him—these are the things which God would have approved; but how far have they been from being the objects of our choice! A life of carelessness and indifference, of worldliness and vanity, and of an idolatrous attachment to the things of time and sense—all of this is hateful in the sight of God; and this has been our habit from our youth up even until now.

***~~This we have done notwithstanding God's incessant endeavors to reclaim us.~~***

How constantly has he spoken to us in his blessed Word! With what warnings, and invitations, and promises, and expostulations has he followed us all our days! How often has he spoken to us in his providential dealings, and how often by his Holy Spirit in our own consciences! Yet all in vain; we have turned a deaf ear to every admonition, "we have refused to return." Our Lord may well complain of us, "How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not!"

Now all this has greatly aggravated our guilt. As our blessed Lord said of the Jews, "If I had not come unto them and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," so it may be said of us. Indeed of us it may be said in a peculiar manner, because of the plainness and fidelity with which the whole counsel of God has been for so many years declared unto you; truly we have in that respect been distinguished as Capernaum of old; and may expect to be distinguished also like that city in our punishment, if we continue to abuse the privileges with which we are so highly favored!

From the evil which they committed, we proceed to notice,

***~~II. The judgments denounced against them.~~***

Under the Jewish dispensation, the commands of God were enforced with temporal rewards and punishments; but to us he holds forth rather such as are spiritual and eternal. Certain it is that God will put a difference between those who serve him, and those who serve him not.

***~~He will do it in this world.~~***

The servants of God, as to external things, may be, and for the most part are, in a state inferior to others; nevertheless they have in reality an infinitely bettor portion than the greatest or happiest of God's enemies. "The very blessings of his enemies are cursed to them," so that "in the midst of their sufficiency they are in straits;" but the Lord's people have even their afflictions sanctified to them, so that they are enabled to "glory in their tribulations," and to "take pleasure in their distresses." They have "food to eat which the world knows not of;" and so refreshing are their draughts from the Fountain of living waters, that "*they never thirst again" for the polluted streams which this world affords!*Their minds are tranquil and at ease, while "the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest;" they live in higher regions, where the storms and tempests of this lower world can scarcely reach; and enjoy in the light of God's countenance a very foretaste of Heaven itself.

***~~He will do it in the world to come.~~***

O! who can conceive how different from that of the ungodly, will be the lot of God's servants there? The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus will serve to give us some idea of it. Here the Rich Man's state appeared to have in it all that was desirable, while the destitution of Lazarus was extreme; but how different their condition there!

The one banqueting at the table of his Lord, and "drinking of the rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand;" the other begging for "a drop of water to cool his tongue!"

The one exalted in glory on his Savior's throne, and filled with a complete fruition of his God; the other "weeping and wailing, and gnashing his teeth" in anguish, which no words can utter, no imagination can conceive!

Truly the words of my text will then have their full accomplishment; and then shall every soul understand what is comprehended in this sentence:

"My servants will eat, but you will go hungry;  
my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty;  
my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.  
My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit."

**ADDRESS.**

***~~1. Those who disregard the warnings of God.~~***

What excuse have you for this rebellious conduct? Is there anything unreasonable in God's commands? Is he not worthy to be feared, and loved, and served, and honored? and would not your own happiness be promoted by conforming to his will? Or have you any doubt whether there is a day of future retribution, when "he will give to every man according to his works?"

You cannot doubt of this. Why then will you not lay to heart the warnings and the exhortations which he sends to you from time to time? I beg you to think of the judgments here denounced against those who are disobedient to his Word; and "flee, while yet you may flee, to the refuge that is set before you!"

***~~2. Those who obey him in spirit and in truth.~~***

We cannot but observe with what peculiar delight God contemplates the happiness of his obedient servants. No less than four times does he repeat the words, "Behold, my servants;" as though he had said, 'These are the people whom I delight to honor; and the whole universe shall see, that they are above all others the blessed of the Lord.'

To you then I say, think of the blessings which are here accorded to you; and labor night and day to secure them. In particular, consult the sacred records, and see what those things are in which your God delights.

Does he delight to honor his only dear Son? Let your whole soul engage in this blessed work, looking to him for all that you want, "receiving everything out of his fullness," and devoting yourselves in body, soul, and spirit, to his service.

Does God delight in holiness? Seek it in its utmost heights, that you may "be holy as he is holy, and perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect."

***~~#1021~~***

***~~THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH~~***

***~~[Isaiah 65:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.17-18)~~***

KJV. "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

NIV. "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy!"

When our blessed Savior came into the world, his coming was thus announced by angels to some poor shepherds, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Next to that in point of importance, and next to it as a ground of joy, is the information which I have to communicate to you this day, relative to a new creation, in which that same adorable Savior will display the full benefits of his redemption, even of that redemption which, at his first coming, he accomplished in the world, "Behold," says God, "I create new heavens, and a new earth." Permit me, then to call your attention to,

***~~I. The glorious prospect that is here set before us.~~***

The language here used is exceedingly strong, more especially when we consider to what an apparently small event it, in the first instance, refers. It refers to the restoration and conversion of God's ancient people, the Jews, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." But, when viewed in its connection with all its consequences, it will be found to deserve the title here given it, "A creating of new heavens and a new earth."

***~~The event itself will be most glorious.~~***

In a temporal view, it will be great. The Jews, beyond all reasonable doubt, will be restored to their own land; and enjoy there a state of prosperity not known by them even in the most favored periods of their history. Compare verse 20-23 with [Amos 9:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.13-15) and [Isaiah 60:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.17-18).

In a spiritual view, it will be greater still. Their conversion to God will be attended with a very extraordinary measure of true piety, [Ezekiel 36:24-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.24-28). In fact, it will eclipse all that was ever known among them, unless perhaps among a few of their most eminent saints, "for the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

As for former things, though glorious in their day, as the stars in the absence of both sun and moon—yet they shall pass away so as no more to be remembered, "The ark of the covenant itself, that peculiar symbol of the divine presence, shall no more be visited by them, or remembered among them; Jerusalem itself being the throne of the Lord. See the text, with [Jeremiah 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.16-17)," and "God himself the light and glory thereof, [Isaiah 60:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.18-19)."

***~~This may fitly be called "new heavens, and a new earth."~~***

So Peter calls it, surely in reference to this very passage, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, [2 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.13)." And by many it is thought, that to this very period John refers, when, in the Apocalyptic vision, he saw it, as it were, accomplished before his eyes, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true! [Revelation 21:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.1-5)."

Doubtless, in its literal extent, this passage will never be fulfilled until we get to Heaven; because, in this world, "death" will continue to reign, until its power shall be destroyed at the resurrection day. But as the destruction of Jerusalem was a type of the destruction of the wicked in the day of judgment; so will the constructing of the New Jerusalem be a very glorious representation of the felicity of Heaven; yes, so bright a picture will the one be of the other, that the same language may well be applied to both, and both be designated as "a creation of new heavens and a new earth."

***~~II. The joy with which this glorious prospect should be contemplated!~~***

God himself declares this great event to be a source of joy even to his own soul, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people;" nay, he says, that "he will rejoice over them with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over them with singing, verse 19 with [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)." Surely then it befits us to rejoice also, yes, and to shout for joy:

***~~1. For the benefits that will be conferred on God's ancient people.~~***

Long have they been the most degraded and despised of all people. At this very day are they classed with swine, in a tax laid upon them at Frankfort, in Germany. There is still (August 1827) a toll paid by them for going over a bridge; and on the ticket which they present is inscribed, "For the passage of Jews and swine." A line is indeed drawn across the word "swine;" but the word is as plain and legible as ever.

But the day is coming when they will be the first and head of all nations, "their righteousness going forth as brightness, and their salvation as a lamp that burns, [Isaiah 62:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.1);" and "all their enemies bowing down themselves at the soles of their feet, [Isaiah 60:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.14)."

And what is God's command to us in reference to that event? " Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel! [Isaiah 44:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.23)."

So, in another place, "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance, [Isaiah 66:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.10-11)."

***~~2. For the benefits that will accrue to the whole world.~~***

The conversion of the Jews will be the signal for an outpouring of blessings upon the rest of mankind; yes, "it shall be as life from the dead to the whole world! [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15)." And can we contemplate this without the liveliest joy? Turn to the 98th Psalm, and there you will see what ought to be the feelings of universal nature, in the prospect of this great event, [Psalm 98:1-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 98.1-9).

***~~3. For the honor that will arise to God himself.~~***

Then will he be glorified as he never yet was, even from the foundation of the world, [Jeremiah 33:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 33.9). Then will all his eternal counsels be completed—yes, and all his perfections be glorified. Did God from eternity choose that people to himself? Did he plant them as a beauteous olive tree for himself? Did he, for their unfruitfulness, break off the branches, and graft us Gentiles in? And will he, in that day, graft in again his afflicted people, and cause the whole tree to flourish in unrivaled beauty to endless ages? Will he thus display before the whole universe the greatness of his power, and the immutability of his grace?

I say, then, the prospect of this is a just ground of joy. The angels in Heaven contemplate it with joy, [Revelation 11:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15-17); and we also should begin that song which shall most assuredly be sung by all the Church on that blessed occasion, "In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you! [Isaiah 12:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.4-6)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who have never yet tasted of this joy.~~***

How many, alas! are there of this description! On account of personal and national benefits, you all have, at some time, rejoiced; but, in the prospects we have been contemplating, you have taken no interest. The conversion of one single soul fills all the angels in Heaven with delight; but the conversion and salvation of millions is passed over by you, as unworthy of a thought.

See, then, how unlike you are to the character of real saints, and how little you resemble God! Indeed, indeed, if you continue so regardless of the happiness of God's Church below, you can have no hope of participating in the blessedness of his Church above.

***~~2. Those who have reason to hope that this new creation is already begun in them.~~***

"Every true Christian is, in fact, a new creation! [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.17);" he is "God's workmanship," as truly as the material heavens are! [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.10). Then I appeal to you, whether you have not found occasion for joy in your own soul? Is it no ground for joy that you have obtained reconciliation with God through the blood of his dear Son; and a renovation of your souls through the operation of his Holy Spirit? Or rather, I must ask, Have you not, "by believing in Christ, been brought to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory? [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8)."

Then I need not urge you to forward this same blessed work in the souls of others; you need only be shown how you may be instrumental in diffusing through the world the knowledge of Christ, and you will of yourselves be ready to employ all that you have, and all that you are, in this blessed cause! [2 Corinthians 8:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.1-4).

***~~#1022~~***

***~~THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER~~***

***~~[Isaiah 65:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.24)~~***

"It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

There is scarcely anything less justly appreciated than the efficacy of prayer. As a Christian community, we acknowledge the *duty*of prayer; but we regard it rather as a *service*to be performed by us, than as a *privilege*conferred by God. In public worship, we are satisfied with saying the responses that are put into our mouths, without ever endeavoring to obtain and exercise a frame of mind suited to them. Decency, rather than fervor, is the object of our pursuit; and when we have gone through the course prescribed by the Church, we think we have performed a service acceptable to God, though in no single petition have we truly poured out our soul before him.

In many instances, if God were to take us at our word, and to offer to grant us the petitions we have presented to him, we should pray them back again with tenfold greater earnestness than was felt in their first delivery. If any person would read carefully the various petitions in the Litany, and compare them with the habitual desires of his heart, he would gain an insight into the state of his soul before God, even such an insight as at present he has no conception of. What worldly man, when uttering these words, "From all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil, good Lord, deliver us!"—really means what he says?

But prayer is, in reality, an instrument of great power; it can, under any circumstances, bring Omnipotence to our aid; yes, so acceptable is it to Almighty God, that even the disposition to offer it shall not be overlooked; but "it shall come to pass," provided we are truly sincere, "that before we call, he will answer; and while we are yet speaking, he will hear."

To enter into the full import of this promise, we should consider,

***~~I. To whom it is made.~~***

***~~To the Millennial period, in the first instance, this promise most undoubtedly refers.~~***

The whole preceding context clearly shows this. In the beginning of the chapter, God denounces the heaviest judgments against his "rebellious people." But, having determined to not utterly destroy them, he says, "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all, verse 8-10."

Then, having contrasted in very strong terms the felicity of the faithful with the misery of those who shall have provoked him to anger, he proceeds to declare, that the whole nation, yes, and the whole world also, shall be restored to his favor, and enjoy a degree of prosperity unknown to his people, even in the most distinguished periods of their history. So great shall be the change on earth, that it shall be as if "new heavens and a new earth were created;" and all former seasons, whether of prosperity or adversity, shall be forgotten, as being altogether lost in the contemplation of their present bliss, verse 17.

Holiness and happiness will then reign throughout all the Church, without intermission and without mixture, verse 18, 19 with [2 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.13). His Jewish people shall no more be subjected to the judgments that have been inflicted on them, Instead of being cut off in the midst of their days, their lives shall be so prolonged, that a person of a hundred years of age shall be accounted but an infant; and if cut off at that age, he shall be regarded as having prematurely perished under the displeasure of an angry God. Both they and their offspring shall be so blessed of the Lord, as to bear in every respect the marks of his special favor; and, above all, their communion with him shall be most sweet and intimate, and their communications from him most rich and abundant! verse 20-25 with [Revelation 21:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.1-4).

**But this promise also belongs to the Church of God in all ages.**

The prophets speak of this privilege as belonging to the saints in their days.

David, in his Psalms, is full of this subject, "The Lord is near unto all those who call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth; He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry, and will save them! [Psalm 145:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 145.18-19)."

The Prophet Isaiah says, "You shall call, and the Lord shall answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, Here I am! [Isaiah 58:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.9)."

To the same effect, the Prophet Jeremiah also speaks, "You shall call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart, [Jeremiah 29:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 29.12-13)."

Of the instances of such gracious communications there would be no end, if I were to attempt to enumerate all that are recorded in the Scriptures. Let one suffice, even that of Daniel, when he set himself, by prayer and supplication, to obtain of God an insight into the prophecies of Jeremiah relative to the termination of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon. He gives us the account of himself, "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill—while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed! [Daniel 9:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.20-23)."

And again, in the following chapter, the angel says to him, "Do not fear, Daniel; for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I am come for your words, [Daniel 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 10.12)."

Does not the New Testament speak the same language also? Were these privileges so richly enjoyed under the Jewish dispensation; and are they denied to us? No; we may "ask what we will;" and be sure of being heard, [John 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.7). Both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will esteem themselves "glorified" in granting our petitions, and doing for us whatever we ask, [John 14:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.13-14). We have only to "believe that the petitions shall be granted," and not one of them shall be offered in vain, [Mark 11:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 11.24). Of this, I say, we may possess the fullest confidence, [1 John 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 5.14-15); and if, "our joy be not full," the fault is altogether our own, [John 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.24); since God, by repeated asseverations, has assured us that we shall not ask in vain, [Matthew 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 7.7-8).

Even at the moment that we are praying, he will often manifest the acceptance of our prayers, [Acts 4:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.31), and "do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we either ask or think, [Ephesians 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 3.20)." *What will you that I should do for you?*is, in fact, our Lord's address to us all; and he only waits to see the desire of his blessings formed in our hearts, as the signal for pouring out upon us all the riches of his grace.

Seeing, then, that the promise is made to God's people in every age, let us consider,

**II. What it speaks to us.**

***~~1. It plainly declares how wonderful is the condescension of Almighty God.~~***

When God promised to dwell in the temple which Solomon had built, the pious monarch exclaimed, "Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?" And well may we utter a similar exclamation, in reference to the subject before us, *"Will God indeed hear and answer the prayers of such insignificant and sinful worms as we?"*To this I answer, that he surely will; nor shall the lowest or most unworthy suppliant in the universe be spurned from his footstool. "Though he is high above all creatures—yet will he have respect unto the lowly." Yes, "though he is the High and Holy One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy—yet will he dwell with him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Nor shall all the angels in Heaven so occupy his attention, but that "he will look through all their shining ranks to the poor and contrite man, who trembles at his Word."

Nor is it the *prayer*only of the contrite that he will listen to; he will not *despise*their desire; their very *sighs*shall enter into his ears, and their *tears*be treasured up in his vials. What amazing condescension is this!

Were it but an earthly monarch that so humbled himself, the whole world would sound with his praises; but He of whom these things are spoken, is King of kings, and Lord of lords! What praises, then, should we render unto him? Never will his grace be fully appreciated, until we shall see the infinite distance which there is between him and us, and the unworthiness of those to whom this mercy is given.

***~~2. It plainly declares the inconceivable folly of prayerless men.~~***

Thousands, who imagine that they pray, do nothing but deceive their own souls! For what is their prayer, but a solemn mockery of God? Let those who never pray, but according to some *form*which they either read out of a book or repeat from memory, inquire what has been the frame of their minds in prayer; and they will find that they have, for the most part, "drawn near to God with their lips, while their hearts have been far from him!"

I do not mean to say that people may not pray with, as truly and fervently as without, a form; for those who have ever entered into the spirit of the Liturgy, know the contrary. But no real saint ever lived without pouring out before God, from time to time, many "cries and breathings" which proceeded from the state of his own mind, and which no written form could have furnished. If this is not our habit, we are as truly prayerless, as if we had never used even an outward form.

Let me then ask of such people:  
Have you no sins to confess to God?  
Have you no mercies to implore?  
Have you no blessings to be thankful for?  
Have you any other source from whence you can derive the blessings you stand in need of?

Ah! think how soon the season for prayer will be forever past; and how vain even the most importunate supplications will soon be, though you should pray only for a drop of water to cool your tongue!

Be in earnest, I beg you, and no longer deceive your own souls. Our Lord tells you, that *the mere formalist worships him in vain!* And if you will only candidly examine the state and habit of your souls when at the throne of grace, you shall attain a deep insight into your real character, and shall know, with great precision, the doom that awaits you in the eternal world! What will be your feelings in that world, when you reflect, that when all Heaven was offered to you—you would not so much as ask for it! How will the poor ignorant *heathen*condemn you, when their labors in the pursuit of happiness shall be recounted, and your reluctance even to offer a prayer shall be adduced against you! See the *papist*, with all his penances and mortifications; will not he also condemn you? See but a *beggar*, in the pursuit of relief for his body; how urgent! how importunate! how averse to take a denial. Shall not he also rise up in judgment against you?

*Truly, the bitterest reflection in Hell itself will be, that, when the Lord Jesus Christ had offered Heaven to you freely in answer to your prayers, you deemed the task too heavy, and the terms too hard.*May God in his mercy save you from such bitter reflections as these! And may it never be said of you, in relation to the heavenly glory, "They had it not, because they asked it not!"

***~~3. It plainly declares how truly blessed are those who live near unto their God in prayer.~~***

They understand the subject, and can bear witness to the truth of God in relation to it. Often have they gone to the throne of grace oppressed with their sins, which, like an insupportable burden, sink them to the earth; but God has sustained them, and given them "rest unto their souls." They went contemplating nothing but continued and perhaps augmented sorrows; and, "before they were aware, their souls are made like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, [Song of Solomon 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 6.12)." "Even before they called, he answered; and while they were yet speaking, he heard."

Know then, your privilege. Carry to the Lord your every need, your every fear; and "cast all your care on him, who cares for you." "Commit your way to him, and" not only shall your trials be alleviated, but "your very thoughts," the most variable things under the whole Heaven, "shall be established." "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord;" and those who possess it, enjoy a Heaven upon earth.

Go on, then, improving daily your liberty of access to God; and spread before him all your needs, and "make known with confidence your requests unto him." So shall "the peace of God now rule your hearts," and "God himself be your portion, and your eternal great reward!"

***~~#1023~~***

***~~THE POOR AND CONTRITE THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S FAVOR~~***

***~~[Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.2)~~***

"To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word!"

It often happens that *external distinctions*serve men as grounds of confidence of their eternal salvation. Many found their hopes of Heaven on no better basis than Micah did, "And Micah said: Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest! [Judges 17:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 17.13)." The Jews in particular thought themselves assured of the Divine favor, because of God's residence in their temple. Hence that common boast among them, "Do not trust in deceptive words and say: This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD! [Jeremiah 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 7.4)."

But God shows them the folly of their notions, verses 1, 2. The import of which is: How can you think that I, an infinite Being, who myself created those things of which you boast, can be allured by an earthly structure to continue my presence among you, if you persist in your evil ways? God then declares the character of those who alone shall be considered by him with any favorable regard:

***~~I. Who are the objects of the Divine favor.~~***

Men like to choose the rich and mirthful for their companions; but those whom God regards are of a very different character:

***~~1. They feel themselves destitute of all good.~~***

It is not temporal, but spiritual poverty, that distinguishes God's people, [Matthew 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.3)

They have discovered their total lack of spiritual wisdom, [Proverbs 30:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 30.2-3).

They are constrained to acknowledge that they have no righteousness of their own, [Isaiah 64:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 64.6).

They realize that they are "without strength" to save themselves, [Romans 5:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.6). [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.5).

They sincerely adopt the language of Paul in [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.18), "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out!"

Nor do they hope for mercy, but as the free gift of God.

They do *not*say, like the servant in [Matthew 18:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.26), "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything!" But they desire to experience the mercy shown to insolvent debtors in [Luke 7:42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 7.42), "Neither of them had the money to pay him back!"

***~~2. They bewail the many sins they have committed.~~***

They have been made to see that sin is hateful to God; and they have felt the bitterness of it in their own consciences! They know experimentally the sensations of David, [Psalm 38:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.4); [Psalm 38:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.6); [Psalm 38:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 38.8). They loath themselves for all their abominations, [Ezekiel 36:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.31). Nor are their convictions merely occasional or transient; they are *habitually*of a tender and "contrite spirit."

***~~3. They pay a reverential regard to the Word of God.~~***

They dare not say like the idolatrous Jews in [Jeremiah 44:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 44.16), "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD!" They rather resemble the man after God's own heart in [Psalm 119:161](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 119.161), "My heart trembles at your Word!"

If the Word is preached, they "receive it as the word, not of man, but of God."

They hear the *threatenings*like the meek Josiah, [2 Chronicles 34:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 34.19); [2 Chronicles 34:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 34.27).

They attend to the *promises*with an eager desire to embrace them.

To every *precept*they listen with an obedient ear like Cornelius, [Acts 10:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.33) and Paul, [Acts 22:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 22.10). Yes, the angels in Heaven, [Psalm 103:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 103.20).

These, though generally considered by the world as weak-minded and superstitious, are not overlooked by the Supreme Sovereign of the world.

***~~II. The peculiar regard which God shows them.~~***

The "eyes of God are in every place beholding the evil and the good;" but he "looks to" these, in a far different manner from others. This distinguishing favor implies:

***~~1. God's approbation of them.~~***

From the proud and self-sufficient, God turns his face James, 4:6; but he "does not despise the broken and contrite in heart, [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 51.17)." Though so exalted in himself, he will not disdain to notice them. His approbation of such characters stands recorded for ever, [Luke 18:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 18.13-14). His reception of the prodigal is an eternal monument of the regard he will show to every repenting sinner!

***~~2. God's care of them.~~***

Wherever they go, his eye is upon them for good, [2 Chronicles 16:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Chron 16.9).

He watches them, in order to deliver them from danger, [Psalm 12:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 12.5).

He watches them, in order to comfort them in trouble, [Psalm 147:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 147.3).

He watches them, in order to relieve them in want, [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18).

He watches them, in order to exalt them to happiness and honor, [1 Samuel 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 2.8).

***~~3. God's delight in them.~~***

***~~There are none on earth so pleasing to God as broken-hearted sinners!~~***

Their sighs and groans are as music in his ears, [Psalm 102:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 102.19-20).

He treasures up their tears in his bottle, [Psalm 56:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 56.8).

He dwells with them as his dearest friends, [Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 57.15).

He rejoices over them as a people in whom he greatly delights, [Zephaniah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.12); [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17).

He preserves them by the unceasing exercise of his power, [Psalm 34:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 34.15); [Psalm 34:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 34.18).

He reserves a glorious inheritance in Heaven for them, [Matthew 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.3).

Nor shall the *fewness*of such people render them at all less the objects of God's regard. It must be acknowledged that they are but few. But if there were only one in the whole world, God would find him out "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word!" Not all the splendor of Heaven, nor all the acclamations of angels, should for a moment divert God's attention from him. Though the broken-hearted sinner is despised by all the human race—yet he is lovely in the eyes of his Maker. Nor will he lack anything in time or eternity. Never shall that declaration in [Psalm 138:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 138.6) in any instance be falsified, "Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly!"

***~~INFERENCES.~~***

***~~1. We should admire the condescension of God!~~***

If we view only the material world we may well stand astonished that God should regard such an insignificant creature as man, [Psalm 8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 8.3-4). But, if we contemplate the majesty of God, we cannot but exclaim with Solomon, [1 Kings 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 8.27). Let then the declaration in the text lead our thoughts up to God. Let us adore him for so clearly describing the objects of his favor. And let us express our admiration in the words of David, [Psalm 113:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 113.5-8).

***~~2. We should desire to attain the character that is pleasing to God!~~***

***~~Broken-hearted sinners are especially beloved by God.~~***

*If He looks on others, it is only as a consuming fire! [Hebrews 12:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.29). How dreadful must it be to have such an enemy! But how delightful to have an almighty, omnipresent guardian!*

Above all, how awful must it be to have him turn his face from us in the day of judgment! Let us then endeavor to humble ourselves before God, [Isaiah 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.11). And rest assured that the promised mercy shall in due time be fulfilled to us, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up! [James 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 4.10)."

***~~#1024~~***

***~~GOD DELIGHTS TO COMFORT HIS PEOPLE~~***

***~~[Isaiah 66:10-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.10-13)~~***

KJV. "Rejoice you with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her; that you may suck, and be satisfied with the bosoms of her consolations; that you may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus says the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall you suck, you shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

NIV. "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance." For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."

It is the peculiar character of the Lord's people, that they enter into the concerns of the Church, rejoicing in her prosperity, and lamenting whatever tends to her dishonor. For both of these exercises of mind, there is occasion in every place and in every age. If but one soul is added to the Church, it is a ground of joy even to the angels in Heaven, and much more to those whose hands are strengthened by every such accession. On the other hand, the low state of the Church must of necessity fill every pious soul with grief and shame.

But there is a time approaching, when the grounds of joy will greatly preponderate, when there will be a vast increase of glory to the Church, when innumerable multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles shall flock to her standard, and "her peace shall flow down like a river." It is of this period that the prophet is speaking, both in this and the preceding chapter; and so sudden will be its arrival, that it will seem as if "a nation were born in a day!"

To this period we should look forward with joy; and whatever occasions there may be for sorrow, on account of existing circumstances, the prospect of such a glorious event should fill us with heavenly consolation!

That we may enter more fully into the exhortation in our text, we shall set before you:

***~~I. A general view of the consolations which God has prepared for his people.~~***

God delights in the character of a comforter. He calls himself "The Comforter of all those who are cast down." Yes, each person of the ever-blessed Trinity is expressly designated by this title:

"God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort! [2 Corinthians 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.3)."

The Lord Jesus is "the Consolation of Israel, [Luke 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.25)."

The Holy Spirit is yet more particularly made known to us as "The Comforter, (that other Comforter,) whom the Father will send to us in Christ's name, [John 14:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.16); [John 14:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.26)."

And well is God set forth under this character, since he has prepared most abundant and "everlasting consolation" for us!

***~~1. There is everlasting consolation in the work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.~~***

What is there which fallen man can want, that is not treasured up for us in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Are we ignorant, guilty, polluted, and enslaved?

"Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption! [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 1.30)."

He is a Priest, on purpose to make atonement for us.

He is a Prophet, on purpose to teach us by his Word and Spirit.

He is a King, on purpose that he may rule and protect us.

In a word, there is "all fullness treasured up in Him! [Colossians 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.19)," in order that we may "receive out of His fullness grace upon grace, [John 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.16)."

Hence the Apostle, assuming it as an obvious and acknowledged truth, urges it as a motive to universal love, "If there is any consolation in Christ—then fulfill my joy," being all in perfect unity with each other, [Philippians 2:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.1-2).

***~~2. There is everlasting consolation in the fullness and stability of his covenant.~~***

The "everlasting covenant," which from all eternity was made between the Father and the Son, was "ordered in all things and sure, [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Sam 23.5)." There is not anything we could desire, but there is the most abundant provision made for it by many and repeated promises, all of which he has confirmed to us by the most solemn oath. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth" Jehovah covenants; Jehovah swears!

And why does he so condescend to the infirmities of men? Is it to guard against a versatility of mind on his part? No; but to comfort us under our fears of his displeasure, "being willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he confirmed it with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong consolation, to lay hold of the hope set before us, [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18)."

***~~3. There is everlasting consolation in the richness and variety of his ordinances.~~***

God does not merely permit us to approach him, but has commanded us to come to his footstool, and to make known to him our requests in every possible situation and circumstance of life. He has appointed ordinances, public, private, social—assuring us, that, if we "draw near to him, he will draw near to us," and "do exceeding abundantly for us above all that we can ask or think." These ordinances are beautifully represented in our text as "breasts of consolation, which we may suck and be satisfied with, yes, from which we may milk out and be delighted with an abundance of glory."

And here let me ask the people of the Lord:

Whether God has not "spread for them, as for his people of old, a table in the wilderness;" and abundantly blessed to them the provisions of his house?

Whether "their weary souls have not been satiated, and their sorrowful souls replenished?"

Whether in these seasons "light has not often arisen to them in obscurity, and their darkness been made as the noon day?"

And especially, whether at the table of the Lord, when they have been feeding on the body and blood of their crucified Savior, they have not often found "his body to be bread indeed, and his blood to be drink indeed?"

Yes! In reading his Word, and in communion with him, the soul enjoys a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined! [Isaiah 25:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.6);" and those who have most frequented "his banqueting house," have most found "his banner over them to be love, [Song of Solomon 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 2.3-4)."

***~~4. There is everlasting consolation in the gifts and trials of his ministers.~~***

Various are the gifts with which the Lord endows his servants, [1 Corinthians 12:8-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 12.8-11), that he may thereby adapt his Word to the necessities of all, [Ephesians 4:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.11-13); and the particular commission which he gives to every one of them is, "Comfort! Comfort my people! Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, [Isaiah 40:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.1-2), "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and say to those who are of a fearful heart: Be strong, do not fear; your God will come and save you! [Isaiah 35:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.3-4). See also, particularly in this view, [Isaiah 61:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.1-3)."

He chooses to speak to us by *men*, rather than by angels; because they, by their own experience of the bitterness of sin and of the consolations of the Gospel, are able to testify of "the things which they have heard, and seen, and handled, [1 John 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.1);" and can speak with tenderness and compassion to others, from a sense of their own great and manifold infirmities, [Hebrews 5:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 5.1-2).

It usually happens, too, that those ministers who are made most useful to the Church of God have themselves been brought into *deep waters*, and been subjected to many trials; God "giving them thereby the tongue of the learned," and qualifying them to "speak a word in season" to people in all the varied circumstances of life! [Isaiah 50:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 50.4).

To this Paul ascribes both the trials and consolations which had so greatly abounded in his experience, "the God of all comfort," says he, "who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, [2 Corinthians 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 1.4-6). This passage is worthy of very particular attention, specially in the view in which it is here adduced."

If we would justly appreciate the consolations prepared for us, let us take,

***~~II. A more particular view of God's everlasting consolations, as represented in the image before us.~~***

The images in the Holy Scriptures have this distinguished excellence, that they bring home to the comprehension and the feelings of every man, truths which are at once the most exalted and most interesting that can be presented to our view. It is quite erroneous to suppose, that, because an image is common, it is therefore unfit to be a vehicle of Divine truth; we should rather say, it is therefore the most proper for illustrating such things as are analogous to it.

The idea of a little infant nursing at his mother's bosom, and borne in her arms, at her side, or dandled on her knees, may seem unworthy to express the love of Jehovah towards his people; yet will we assert, that the whole creation does not present an image that will more adequately convey this sentiment to our minds. It suggests to us,

***~~1. God's attention to our needs.~~***

How great and manifold are the needs of a little child; not one of which the child himself is able to supply! But his mother provides for every one of them, and anticipates them even before he is brought into the world.

In like manner, the number of our needs is only equaled by the extent of our helplessness; we are not of ourselves able to do anything good, nor "to speak a good word," no, nor even "to think a good thought." But our God has promised "to supply all our needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus! [Philippians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 4.19)." "He knows what things we have need of before we ask him;" and he has engaged, that, "though the lions may lack and suffer hunger, those who fear him shall want no manner of thing that is good;" he will give them "grace to help them in every time of need," and "his grace shall be sufficient for them."

***~~2. God's sympathy with us in our troubles.~~***

Through diseases of various kinds, and accidents almost innumerable, the days of infancy afford much scope for the exercise of parental tenderness and affection. And where is the mother whose affections have not frequently yearned over her afflicted offspring? How has the sudden cry of her infant pierced her soul, even as with a sword! Yet is this but a very faint image of the tenderness and compassion of our God. In reference to his people of old, it is said, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, [Judges 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Judg 10.16);" and "in all their afflictions he was afflicted, [Isaiah 63:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.9)."

So now, if any presume to injure them, God says, "He who touches you, touches the apple of my eye! [Zechariah 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.8)." Our Divine Master identifies himself with his people, and regards everything that is done to them, whether good or evil, as done unto himself; if they are persecuted, it is he who is smitten [Acts 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.4); or if they have kindness ministered unto them, it is he who is relieved, [Matthew 25:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.45).

One member of the body does not more participate the feelings of the rest, than he does the trials and troubles of his redeemed people; indeed, he submitted to be "made in all things like unto them, on purpose that he might, as our faithful and compassionate High Priest," be stimulated, as it were, from his own experience, to pity and relieve his tried and tempted people, [Hebrews 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 2.17-18); [Hebrews 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.15).

***~~3. God's forbearance towards us in our perverseness.~~***

Few things perhaps are more trying to the character than the exasperation of a perverse child; it requires all the love of a parent to support it, when it is great and of long continuance. But what parent ever had to endure a thousandth part of the perverseness which our God has seen in us—even in the midst of all his kindness? No one can read the history of Israel in the wilderness without being amazed at the multitude of their provocations, and at the patience with which God endured their obstinate conduct forty years in the wilderness, yet this is a just representation of human nature, in every place, and every age. Of the very best among us it may he said, that "he falls seven times a day;" yes, "in many things we all offend." But God "does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities;" on the contrary, "he spares, when we deserve punishment;" "he keeps mercy for thousands," who, alas! would soon cast it away, "he forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and, if constrained to chasten us with the rod, he "does not allow his whole displeasure to arise," but *chastises in mercy*only, and "does not utterly take away his loving-kindness from us."

***~~4. God's affectionate endearments.~~***

It is well known with what delight a mother will bear her infant in her arms, and dandle him on her knees; and it should seem as if this were an extravagant representation of the Savior's love to us; but he "bore his people, and carried them all the days of old;" even "as an eagle bears on her wings" her unfledged offspring, so does he now "carry the lambs in his bosom, and gently lead those who are with young."

It is, if we may so speak, a delight to him to "manifest himself to them" in the most endearing manner; to "lift up the light of his countenance upon them;" to "kiss them with the kisses of his lips," and to "shed abroad his love in their hearts by the Holy Spirit." He accounts them "his jewels," and "his peculiar treasure;" and "rejoices over them, to do them good" in every possible way.

Not all the endearments of the tenderest mother can exceed the exercises of his mind towards us, as described by an inspired prophet, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over you with singing! [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17)."

***~~ADDRESS.~~***

***~~1. Those who are strangers to our Jerusalem.~~***

It is generally thought among you, that there is no happiness in the Christian religion. But, I would ask: Where else is it to be found? You may go and watch for it through the whole creation in vain, "The depth says: It is not in me; and the sea says: It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof! [Job 28:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 28.14-15)." It is in Christ alone, that the nations of the earth either are, or can be, blessed. If it is said, that *religion has its peculiar trials*; we acknowledge readily, that it has; but if it brings trials, it affords comforts also to counterbalance them; indeed the very word "comfort" necessarily implies in it somewhat of previous pain or trouble. Sorrow for sin, the mortification of our indwelling corruptions, the enduring of contempt and reproach for Christ's sake—may all be considered as painful in themselves; but none ever took "this yoke" upon them, without finding it, after a season, both "light and easy;" and being enabled at last to take pleasure, and to glory, in those very trials which appear so formidable to unenlightened men! [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 12.9-10).

But if you wish to be happy and yet hold fast your sins—that is impossible! As the tenderest mother in the universe cannot make her child happy, while he is under the influence of perverse and wicked dispositions—so neither can God himself make you happy, while you are living in disobedience to anyone of his commands.

There must of necessity be a difference between a dutiful and a disobedient child; to the one a wise mother will impart many testimonies of her regard, which she is constrained to withhold from the other. So it is with God; he manifests himself to his faithful people as he does not unto the world; and if we would but walk before him as obedient children, he would give us a foretaste of Heaven itself, in the light of his countenance, and in the tokens of his love.

Were this duly considered, we should no longer be content to live as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," but would seek to become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

***~~2. Those who love and mourn for her.~~***

Your concern for the welfare of the Church is a hopeful evidence that you have received the Word of God in truth; for it is the characteristic mark of all true saints, that "they prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy." But while you are concerned about the Church at large, you must not forget, that you yourselves constitute a part of that Church, and that the other members of this great family will rejoice or mourn, according as you walk worthy, or unworthy, of your high calling.

The comfort of God's children depends, not only on the manifestations of his favor, but on the state of the Church around them. What tears did David shed on account of those who kept not God's law! And how did Paul feel, as it were, all the pangs of travail renewed in his soul, when the misconduct of some in the Galatian Church caused him to stand in doubt of them!

On the other hand, no words could express the joy which John, the beloved disciple, felt, "when he saw his children walk in truth." Be watchful then over your whole spirit and conduct; and see that they are such as befit the Gospel of Christ. On this the honor of your heavenly Father depends; on this also depend the manifestations of his love to your souls. Only seek that God may be glorified in you; and then shall thanksgivings abound towards him on your account; your own "peace also shall flow down like a river," und the prosperity of Zion be greatly increased.

***~~#1025~~***

***~~THE JEWS TO CONVERT THE GENTILES~~***

***~~[Isaiah 66:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.18-20)~~***

KJV. "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them; and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the islands afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And then shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the House of the Lord."

NIV. "I . . . am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels."

When we look upon the world around us, and consider how utterly God is neglected and despised by the great mass of his intelligent creatures, and that successive generations of immortal beings are swept away without any knowledge of a Savior, or any hope of beholding the face of God in peace—we are ready to say with the prophet, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep night and day, [Jeremiah 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 9.1)," for the dishonor done to my God, and for the miseries which, like a relentless deluge, are overwhelming the whole earth!

It is however a consolation to know, that this state of things is drawing to a close, and that a new era is about to appear, when the darkness which now covers the earth shall be dispelled, and righteousness reign, where sin has hitherto maintained an undisputed sway.

The prospect of this period, which is now fast approaching, and speedily to commence, was the great support of the Church under the distresses to which she was reduced in the Babylonish captivity; and it still forms the richest source of consolation to all who have any zeal for God, or any concern for the welfare of mankind. So impressed was the prophet Isaiah with his views of this mighty change, that he could scarcely speak of anything else; or, if he did speak of the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, or of the blessings treasured up for them by the introduction of the Messiah's kingdom—he constantly interwove in his statements such grand and glorious expressions, as could not fail of carrying forward the minds of his readers to this blessed time, when "new heavens and a new earth were to be created, verse 22," and the universal empire of righteousness to be established throughout the earth. Of this period he speaks in the words before us; which will lead me to set before you,

***~~I. God's purpose respecting the Gentile world.~~***

"I am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory." This is the fixed purpose of Jehovah.

***~~1. This purpose was proclaimed by all the prophets.~~***

Respecting "the gathering of the nation" to Christ, there is but one voice, from the time of Abraham to the close of the sacred canon. Christ is that "*Seed*in whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed, [Genesis 18:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 18.18)." Christ is that "*Shiloh*, to whom the gathering of all people shall be, [Genesis 49:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 49.10)." "The utmost ends of the earth are promised to Him for his possession, [Psalm 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.8)." "All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall do him service, [Psalm 72:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.11);" "from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof shall his name be great among the Gentiles, [Malachi 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 1.11);" and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, [Revelation 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15)."

But there is a peculiarity in this prophecy which must not be overlooked. God has in the great work of redemption revealed his glory to mankind. In that he has shown how "mercy and truth could meet together, and righteousness and peace could kiss each other, [Psalm 85:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 85.10)." There he has proclaimed his name as "merciful and gracious, and yet as not by any means clearing the guilty, [Exodus 34:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 34.6-7)." *It is this harmony of his perfections that chiefly constitutes his glory*.

Previous to the revelation of his Gospel, the highest archangel could not have conceived how God could be "a just God, and yet a Savior, [Isaiah 45:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.21)." But in Christ Jesus the whole difficulty is solved. By sending him into the world, and laying our iniquities on him, the fullest demands of justice are satisfied, and a way is opened for the richest exercise of mercy towards a guilty world; the truth of God which was pledged for the execution of all his threatening, is preserved; and yet may the sinner, who was liable to them, be absolved, and be restored to the enjoyment of his forfeited inheritance!

This is the mystery in which all the glory of the Godhead shines; and which all the nations of the earth shall in due time have revealed to them in its meridian splendor. This is fully declared by the prophet in a preceding chapter, "Arise, shine! for your light has come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising! [Isaiah 60:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.1-3); [Isaiah 62:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.2)." And the prophet Habakkuk also marks it with peculiar precision, "The earth," says he, "shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!"

***~~2. This purpose shall assuredly to be fulfilled in God's season.~~***

Were we to judge by present appearances, we would say that such an event could never be accomplished. But so we should have thought respecting the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, and from Babylon; and of the establishment of Christianity by the ministry of a few poor fishermen. But it is not in this way, that we are to form our judgment or our expectations. We have only to ask ourselves, "Has God promised these things? And, Is he able to perform them?" These points being ascertained, we are as sure of the event, as if we already saw it before our eyes; for "God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent." In fact, the prophet did, as it were, behold it actually accomplishing in his day; he saw the Gentile world "flying to Christ, as doves to their windows;" and he called upon the Church to rejoice in it, "Break forth into joy; sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem; the Lord has made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God! [Isaiah 52:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 52.9-10) with 60:4, 8."

If the purpose itself fill us with wonder, we shall be no less amazed when we are informed of,

***~~II. The instruments by whom he will effect this purpose.~~***

It was by the ministry of Jews that God was pleased to bring in the first fruits of the Gentiles; and by the ministry of the Jews he will gather in the whole harvest. In this passage the prophet distinctly states who are:

***~~1. The people ordained to this work.~~***

They are here designated as "those who have escaped unto the nations;" and who these are there can be no doubt. They are the remnant of the Jewish nation dispersed throughout the world. See [Isaiah 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 4.2). What the particular places are among which they are scattered, it is not necessary to determine; it is sufficient to know, that they are countries widely distant from each other, and countries "which have not heard of the Redeemer's fame, or seen his glory." Among these nations shall "an ensign be raised" by the Jews, whom "God has sent to them" for this express purpose; and it is by their ministry that God will diffuse the knowledge of salvation among them.

The language here used is clear and decisive, "I will send those that escape from them," that is, the Jews, "I will send them unto the nations; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles."

How little has the Christian world adverted to this prophecy! How little have any of us, when perhaps we have been pouring contempt upon the Jews, recollected for what glorious purposes they are reserved, and what a blessing they are ordained to be to the whole world! Be it known unto you, brethren, that the Jews are the people ordained of God to "declare his glory among the Gentiles." They themselves are at present as unconscious of the end for which they are so dispersed, as the Gentiles are among whom they are scattered; but they shall nevertheless infallibly execute the office for which they are designed.

The prophet Micah says of them, "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarries not for man, [Micah 5:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 5.7)." Now the *clouds*know not the end for which God sends them over the face of the earth; nor is the *dew*aware of the purpose which God has designed it to effect; but both the one and the other infallibly and effectually execute the purposes of Heaven, and cause the parched ground to send forth its fruits. So shall the Jews do, when once the light has burst in upon their minds; and "the receiving of them into the Christian Church shall be as life from the dead" to the whole world! [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15).

**2. The success that shall attend their labors.**

As the effects of rain are rapid on the whole vegetable creation, so shall the fruits of their ministry among the Gentiles be rapid and abundant, "They shall bring all their Gentile brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, says the Lord; as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord." The meat-offering consisted of fine flour unleavened, and mingled with oil; oil also was poured upon it, and incense put thereon, [Leviticus 2:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Lev 2.1-6).

Of how many myriads of particles a handful of flour consisted, we know not; but it very fitly represents the congregated masses of believers that shall then be presented to the Lord, all of them pure and unleavened, and all of them sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

This is the very construction which Paul himself puts upon the text, which he represents as in part fulfilled in himself, who was, in a more peculiar manner than any other of the Apostles, "the minister of Jesus Christ to the *Gentiles*, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, [Romans 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 15.16)."

Nor let it be thought that this is a fanciful interpretation; for the prophet himself, in a foregoing chapter, represents the converts as "a cloud, [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8)," which, whether it is understood of dust, or of rain, conveys precisely the same idea as we have just suggested from the meat-offering; and the Psalmist also places the matter in exactly the same view, when he says, that "the handful of grain cast by them upon the tops of the mountains shall grow up as the woods of Lebanon, and as the piles of grass upon the earth, [Psalm 72:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 72.16)." Indeed the prophet himself uses in another place a still stronger figure; for he represents the Gentile world at that period as "flowing (contrary to nature), like a mighty river, up to the Lord's House, when established upon the top of the highest mountains, [Isaiah 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 2.2);" so powerful, so harmonious, so universal shall be the concourse of the Gentiles to Mount Zion, in consequence of God's blessing on the labors of their Jewish instructors.

***~~See then,~~***

***~~1. Of what importance the conversion of the Jews is to the whole world!~~***

Many individuals may be, and are, converted from among the Gentiles by the labors of Gentile teachers; and we do well to exert ourselves in every possible way for the diffusion of Christian knowledge among them. But though we may reap the first-fruits, the gathering in of the harvest is reserved for laborers of the Jewish community.

There is a passage which is supposed to establish a directly opposite opinion; but the passage itself is quite misunderstood. It is said, that "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, [Romans 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.25);" and from thence it is supposed, that the whole of the Gentiles must be converted, before that blindness is removed from the Jewish people.

But in another part of the same chapter it is said, that, as the diminishing of the Jews was the means of enriching the Gentile world, much more shall their fullness be so; the receiving of the Jews into the Church being the signal for, and the means of, a spiritual resurrection to the whole Gentile world, [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15). The "fullness" in both places imports, not the complete ingathering of all, but the commencement of that mighty work. It will begin among the Gentiles (as it has indeed already begun); and then it will proceed among the Jews, who shall carry it on, and perfect it, among the Gentiles. As soon as the Jews determinately rejected the Gospel, it was preached unto the Gentiles, [Acts 13:45-47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 13.45-47); and as soon as the Gentiles begin in any considerable numbers to embrace the faith of Christ, we hope and believe, that God will make known himself unto the Jews, and make them the instruments of converting the whole world.

If then we have any concern for the Gentile world, we should labor with all our might (in prayer, and in the use of all suitable means) to impart the Gospel to the Jews; so that they may be ready to execute the work to which they are ordained, and for which they are fitted beyond any other people upon the face of the earth. As having their own Scriptures (upon which ours are founded) with them, and as understanding the languages of the different countries wherein they dwell—they are ready at any moment to preach the Gospel to those around them, as soon as ever "the veil is taken from their own hearts." Being acquainted with their own Scriptures, they will unlock the mysteries contained in ours, the very instant that "the key of knowledge" is put into their hands. Their conversion will itself be such a confirmation of prophecy, that all will be ready to receive their word, and to obey the Gospel delivered by them.

Let us therefore arise to our long-neglected duty; and "neither rest ourselves, nor give rest unto our God," until he calls in his banished children, and makes Jerusalem once more a praise in the earth, [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.6-7).

***~~2. What are those points to which we must particularly attend in our own conversion.~~***

The Jews are to "declare God's glory among the Gentiles," and to "offer them up as a holy offering unto the Lord." These are the two essential points of conversion; and if either are lacking in us, we can never behold the face of God in peace.*We must have light in our understandings, and holiness in our hearts.*The first thing in the old creation was light; and that also is the first in the new, "God, who created light out of darkness, must shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6)." This is not a mere speculative knowledge; but such a view of God's glory, as leads immediately to a willing surrender of our souls to him, "as a living sacrifice, [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1). [2 Corinthians 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 8.5)."

The two must go together, as the *root*and the *fruit*. They are absolutely *inseparable*. *We never can devote ourselves unreservedly to God, until we feel our obligations to him for all the wonders of redeeming love!* But if once we have right views of Christ, "we shall immediately purify ourselves, even as he is pure, [1 John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.3)." Let us then never be satisfied, until "Christ is fully revealed in our hearts, [Galatians 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 1.16)," and until we so "behold his glory as to be changed by it into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord! 2 Corinthians 3:18."