

PAVED WITH LOVE
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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.”
Song of Solomon 3:10.

THIS portion of the Song describes the royal bridegroom as traveling up from the wilderness in an eastern palanquin, attended by His bodyguard, and by those who bear torches and burn perfumes. We have a description of the sumptuous chariot-bed in which this great monarch traveled, describing it as being made of cedar, with pillars of silver, a bottom of gold, curtains of purple, and within it a patterned floor, with pavement, not of precious stones, but of priceless love. Metaphor is suddenly dropped in this last item, and the result is a complicated, but very expressive form of speech. Some regard the expression as signifying a pavement of stone, engraved with hieroglyphic emblems of love which made up the floor of this traveling chariot. But this would surely be very uncomfortable and unusual, and therefore others have explained the passage as referring to choice embroidery, and dainty carpets, woven with cost and care, with which the interior of the traveling chair was lined. Into such embroidery, sentences of love poetry may have been worked. Needlework was probably the material of which it was composed—skillful fingers would therein set forth emblems, and symbols of love. As the spouse in the 2nd chapter sings, “His banner over me was love,” probably alluding to some love word upon the banner, probably tokens of love were carved or embroidered, as the case may have been, upon the interior of the chariot, so that “The midst thereof was paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” We need not, however, tarry long over the metaphor, but endeavor to profit by its teaching.

This palanquin or traveling chariot in which the king is carried represents the covenant of grace, the plan of salvation, and in fact, the whole system by which the Lord Jesus comes down in mercy among men, and by which He bears His people along with Himself through the wilderness of this world, onward to the rest which He has prepared for them. It is, in a word, the mediatorial work of Jesus. The ark was carried through the wilderness preceded by the pillar of cloud and fire, as the symbol of the divine presence in mercy, and here we have a somewhat similar representation of the great King of grace, borne in regal splendor through the world, and bearing His elect spouse with Him. May it be ours to be made to ride like Jeshurun upon the high places of the earth in happy fellowship with Him whose goings forth was of old, even from everlasting.

I. I shall beg you to notice, first, this morning, THE GROWTH WHICH IS INDICATED HERE AS TO OUR VIEWS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE. The description advances step by step, each sentence mentioning an additional and far-enhanced preciousness. Thus do those who study the work of salvation prize it more and more. At the first glance, the sweet singer who speaks in this song perceived that the chariot was made of cedar, a costly wood. A closer view revealed “the silver pillars, beauteous to behold”; further observation showed “the bottom all of burnished gold.” From cedar to silver and from silver to gold we have a clear advance as to precious material. On looking again, the observer remarks “the top of princely purple”; this is yet more precious as the type of imperial dignity, and the token of that effectual atonement which was worked out by the bloody stream of Calvary. The blood, which dyed that purple canopy, is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire. And then, though one would think there could be no advance beyond the precious blood, the song proceeds yet one step further, for we find that “The midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.”

Beloved, the whole way of salvation was devised by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is all His planning, and all His own carrying out. Therefore the Song says, “King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood

of Lebanon.” Jesus is the sole author and finisher of our faith. Salvation is His from first to last. Every part of the covenant reveals His master hand. This is the glory of the whole, and this the believing eye perceives at the very first glance, and is thereby made glad. But further knowledge reveals other bright and glorious facts, and as the matter is considered, wonder and gratitude increase. Let us, then, take a brief survey of this glorious gospel chariot, that wondrous thing—Jehovah’s covenant of grace. The first item is that it is made of “the wood of Lebanon.” The finest wood upon the earth was that of the cedar, and the finest cedars were those which grew upon the Lebanon range. The Lebanon cedars, indeed, appear to have possessed qualities not found in the common cedar with which we are acquainted. That which was reckoned the best wood is used as the token of the super excellence of the covenant of grace. Cedar, moreover, was not only the most costly wood, and most esteemed, but it is one of the most lasting. London says that it is particularly valued for its durability. Fit type of that “Covenant ordered in all things and sure,” of which not one jot or tittle shall ever fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word on which we trust shall abide forever. In addition to its other excellences, cedar wood exhales a sweet perfume, so that a chariot of cedar would not only be very lasting, but very delightful to ride in, even as at this day we joy in God’s salvation, and are filled with peace through believing. When we look at the covenant of salvation, at the very first glimpse of it we see that there is none like it. Many schemes have been imagined and preached up as ways of salvation, but not one of them can be likened to the method of atonement by blood, reconciliation through a substitutionary sacrifice, redemption by the incarnate God, salvation all of grace from first to last. When this is compared to a chariot, no timber less noble than the sweet-scented fir, cut from the monarch of Israel’s royal forest, could worthily set it forth. Lies and vanity make up all other plans, but this is royal truth. Other ways of salvation have been tried, but they have soon proved to be failures. The worm of human depravity has eaten into the choicest wood that was ever felled in the forests of human merit. Decay has seized upon all the goodly oaks of unaided human endeavors. Rottenness has devoured all carnal boasts, but the cedar wood of our hope in Jesus has shown no sign of crumbling to decay and it never will. There is in the atonement made by Christ, perpetuity of prevalence. It has paid for sin and will pay to the very end of time, so that whoever confides in it has a hope which will not deceive him. I dare await the test of a long and afflicted life, or of a sudden and painful death, for the ground of my hope is undisturbed by outward circumstances. Like the cedar, it is adapted to abide all weathers. As surely as the body of the Lord saw no corruption, so surely shall my hope never turn to despair, and even if it is buried, it shall rise again. What consolation such a hope affords us! And for this reason, as perfume comes forth from cedar wood, so do fragrant comforts come pouring forth from the salvation which Jesus Christ has worked out for us. It is a pleasant, as well as a safe thing to rest in what Christ has done. Our joy is greatest when our faith in Him is most simple. The bare cedar wood is most fragrant. We derive from every part of His work some joy; every part of it smells most sweetly. He is all happiness, all consolation, all bliss to us and when our spirit casts itself in perfect simplicity upon Him, it breathes a perfumed atmosphere, delicious and reviving. If such is the first and lowest item in the description of the chariot, what will the richer portions be?

We will now look more closely at the royal chariot, and note well the four pillars which support the canopy. And as we gaze, we find that they are of silver. Something more precious than cedar, for the salvation of Jesus grows upon us, and unto us who believe, He is more and more precious. There are some pictures so well painted that you may examine them with a magnifying glass, and instead of detecting defects you will perceive yet greater beauties. And so may you examine the work of our blessed Lord microscopically, if you choose, and the more you look, the more you will marvel, for He is so really glorious, so intrinsically precious, so infinitely to be admired. And what are these pillars, do you think, which support the canopy, and add such beauty to the chariot? What are they but divine holiness and infinite purity? Silver is constantly used in Scripture as the type of that which is precious and pure—“As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” And O beloved, how holy the gospel is. The Lord’s Word is very pure in itself and very purifying for those who receive it. Wherever the true gospel is preached, it promotes holiness, and in so doing acts according to its nature, creating its like. There is not a doctrine of the gospel which is not according to godliness. None of its blessings make provision for the flesh. None of its precepts encourage sin, and none of its promises wink at iniquity. The Spirit of the gospel is always the spirit of holiness. It wages determined war against the lusts of the flesh, and

consequently the gospel is abhorred by the unclean. It lays the axe at the root of sin, and like a fire devours all evil. As for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, is He not immaculate holiness? If you would see holiness embodied, where can you look but to the person of our well-beloved Master? Where are His imperfections? Can you find a flaw in His language or in His actions, in Himself or in the Spirit that moved Him? Is He not altogether perfect? Look, then, at the gospel, the way of salvation, and the covenant of grace, and you shall see conspicuous holiness everywhere, but especially when you come to deal with the center of the gospel, the great atoning sacrifice. Four silver pillars hold up this crimson canopy. The blood-red propitiation covers us from the wrath of God, and the holiness of God holds up this interposing medium. He is not unrighteous to forget the blood of the atonement. Because He is a just God, He is now the Savior of those who are sheltered beneath the reconciling blood of Calvary. The Lord could not forgive sin till first the honor of His law had been vindicated, and that being done, the same honor requires that the atonement should be respected, and the believing sinner saved. When we see Christ upon the cross, we learn how God's inflexible justice, like unbending pillars of pure silver, holds up aloft the crimson shelter of vicarious death, beneath which the saints are secure. Even to save His own elect, Jehovah would not mar His integrity, nor allow His great white throne to be stained with injustice. He is no respecter of persons, and when sitting on the throne of judgment, even His own chosen, which He loves with everlasting love, must be treated with the same impartiality as His enemies. This He has effected by accepting His Son in their place, and exacting from Him those penalties which were due from them, but might be justly received at the hands of their federal head. There is no injustice in the salvation of the believer. There is not even an abatement of the claims of just retribution. All is done openly, and so as to challenge the most severe examination. Conspicuously before the eyes of all, the silver pillars of purity bear up the sacred atonement. Is not this a matter for superlative delight?

But if we look more closely, we discern what would not have been perceived at a distance. "The bottom" of the chariot bed "is of gold," the most precious metal of all. This is to indicate that the foundations of salvation are imperishable and unchangeably precious. The basis of grace is laid in the immutable purpose and unchanging decree of God, and in the everlasting, undiminished, unchangeable love of God towards His dear Son, and to those who are in Him. Blessed be God for a salvation which will not yield under pressure, or fail us in our hour of peril. It is no base metal, but gold tried in the fire. I cannot understand those who think that God loves His people one day, and hates them the next. That though He knew what they would be, and knew that they would fall into sin, yet He resolved to take them to Himself as His children for a little while and then afterwards to disinherit them. God forbid I should ever understand a doctrine so dishonoring to the Lord who changes not. My own love to my children makes me feel that they must be my children as long as *they* live, and *I* live. And surely God's children must and shall be His children while God Himself shall live, and His people shall exist. Beloved, the bottom on which we rest as saved sinners is not the shifting foundation of our own feelings, works, prayers, or resolves. If our salvation depended upon our good behavior, we might as well build on the clouds, and pile up bubbles as our cornerstones. Yes, and if it rested upon our own unaided faith, if there were no guarantee of grace to keep that faith alive, but all rested on the exercise of faith by us, it were better never to have had a hope of salvation at all, than to have had such a wretched, unsubstantial mockery, certain to end before long in fatal disappointment. You and I have not so learned Christ. We have left the miry clay for the solid rock. God has made an eternal purpose concerning His people, and that will never be changed. Infinite love ordained their salvation, and will never reverse its decree, though day and night should cease. Infinite power guarantees the fulfillment of the divine purpose, and what can stand against omnipotence? A complete atonement has already been made, and it will never lose its efficacy, therefore those for whom it was worked out must be saved. There is, moreover, an indwelling Spirit who has come into God's people to abide with them forever, according to the covenant promise, "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them; I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Our spiritual life does not hang on a thread, as it would do if it were in our own keeping, but it depends upon Jesus, for has He not said, "Because I live you shall live also"? Nothing can be more secure than the salvation of the soul that believes in Jesus, for it rests in God alone. Of the chariot of salvation we may say with quaint Ralph Erskine—

"Its bottom is a groundwork sure

*Of pure and solid gold,
From bankrupt beggary to secure,
From falling through to uphold.”*

Let us view the royal canopy of the chariot—“The covering thereof is of purple.” As the king and his bride traveled, they needed to be screened from the sun’s baleful rays. Lo, over the head of the spouse hangs a regal covering of purple. Look up, my soul, and see what interposes between your God and you! He must smite you, for you are a sinner, but you are covered and sheltered, and are living happily. What is it that shields you? What, indeed, but the atoning blood!—

*“Ah, who can view that purple covering,
And turn away unmoved, insensible?
Who can discern it, and forget that day
When impious greetings shouted forth disdain,
When, crowned with thorns, the Man of sorrows stood
In purple robes of cruel mockery?
Despised, rejected, yet a king, indeed,
Whom they shall see hereafter on His throne.”*

The atonement shelters us: never was a soul injured by the rays of God’s justice when hidden beneath this purple, and never shall there be. There is no repose for the conscience anywhere else, but there is perfect repose here. I often hear theories about what Christ did which remind me of Dr. Duncan’s description of Robertson, of Brighton: “Robertson believed that Christ did something or other, which somehow or other had some connection or other with salvation.” This may suit others, but is of no sort of use to me. I feel that if Christ did not actually and literally die as my Substitute, the just for the unjust, I am not saved, and never can be at rest in my heart again. I renounce all preaching whatever if substitution is not the leading feature of my theme, for there is nothing worth preaching when that is gone. I regard that doctrine as the fundamental truth of the gospel, which, denied, you have slain the gospel, and which, cast into the background, you have covered the gospel with a cloud. That Jesus Christ was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that though He was just, He was treated as a sinner, and in our place suffered the wrath of God due to us, this is the kernel and vital heart of the gospel. Conscience tells every man that God must punish sin. Its voice, more or less loudly, always proclaims that sin must be punished. This is no arbitrary arrangement; it is inevitable. Sin and suffering have a natural relationship. If God is just, sin must bring evil consequences upon the man who commits it, and until conscience understands that this evil was borne by Christ, that He suffered what ought to have been suffered by the sinner, and that He was justly a substitute because He was the head and Adam of those for whom He died—until, I say, the conscience knows this, it cannot find rest. Get under the blood-red canopy, and then you are at peace, but not till then. Therefore you find that whenever God revealed Himself to His people, the most apparent thing was always the blood. Abel must bring a bleeding lamb, and Noah a slaughtered beast. When the King feasted with His chosen in Egypt, the blood adorned the lintel and the two side-posts of every house wherein He revealed His saving power. When He marched through the wilderness, one of the coverings of His tabernacle was made of rams’ skins dyed red, and all within and around the holy courts, themselves, were perpetually sprinkled with blood, for almost all things were under the law purified by blood. The voice of the law was always proclaiming what the gospel proclaims, too, that, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” Our Savior’s life must end in blood upon the tree, and before that closing scene, His last feast of love, His communion with His disciples had for its most conspicuous provision, the cup of red wine in which His blood was symbolized. Every time He sets forth, visibly, His communion with His people here below, the wine must be poured forth. God cannot and will not reveal Himself to man except through the medium of the perfect satisfaction by the pouring out of the life of the Substitute in the place of the sinner.

“The covering thereof is of purple.” Oh, it is not for these lips to tell how precious that purple is. It is not possible, even, for this heart to know how precious is the blood of the Son of God, the vital blood which out of love to us He poured out freely for our redemption. Sit at your ease, my brothers and sisters, in the chariot of salvation, rejoicing as you look upward, and let no doubts, fears, mistrusts, nor suspicions vex you, for beneath the blood-red canopy you are secure.

There is yet one more step—we rise from the blood to the love which caused it to flow, and we read of the royal chariot—“The midst thereof was paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.” Not merely the bottom covered with it, but, as in a carriage, the whole vehicle lined with something soft to sit upon and lean upon. So the whole covenant of grace is, within, garnished and beautified, and made delightful to the believer’s soul by the sweet love of God in Christ. The covenant is God’s love in its secret places; all love, unalloyed love, invisible love, nothing else but love. When one comes to know most of the covenant, and admires the wisdom, the power, the purity, the eternity of all that God has done, yet the most striking characteristic of it to the advanced Christian is the love, the mighty love of God, by which he is brought by Jesus Christ into eternal salvation. You have crowned me with Your loving-kindness. You have loved my soul out of the pit. You have loved me, and given Yourself for me. Your love has redeemed me with a price most precious. Your love has made me what I am. Your love carries on the work, and Your love will complete it, and present me to You in its own perfect image, for “The midst of it is paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.”

The point we have proved is this, that everything in the study of the gospel grows upon you. I earnestly exhort you, therefore, to meditate much in the Scriptures, to consider much the person and character of your Lord, to meditate full often upon His beauties, and upon all the work which He has done on your behalf. Do not be satisfied with a superficial survey, as many Christians are. These are not the days of contemplation as the old Puritan times were; we are too apt to be superficial. But remember that while there are nuggets of gold upon the very surface of Scripture, yet the most valuable mines of gold are far down, and you must dig into them. Pray God that you may be well taught in the things of Christ. There are some sciences in which you can master all that is worth knowing in a short time, and the further you go in the study, the more you perceive that nothing is very certain, and you soon get weary of it. But the science of Christ crucified grows upon you. You get more assured of the facts of it, and more intensely delighted in them. I exhort you, therefore, to sit constantly at the Master’s feet with Mary, and I pray that each one of us may know, by following on to know the Lord, what are “the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

II. We shall now NOTE THE POSITION FROM WHICH THE LOVE MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT IS BEST SEEN. “The midst thereof is paved with love.” It is not, therefore, to be seen from the outside. The mere outsider understands nothing of the love of God to His people as displayed in the covenant of grace. I am certain that there are many of you here present who have heard the gospel for years, and yet no more know the sweetness of it than the floor I am standing upon. A man may pass the door of the London Tavern or the Mansion House for years, and yet have no notion of the banquets within, for these are indoors, and you must enter to partake of them. Savory vapors floating from the festive board may awaken a transient imagination, but no more. The cock on the dunghill turned over the diamond, and according to the fable, remarked that he cared very little for it. He would sooner have found a grain of barley. And likewise, many hear of the sweetness of true religion, but they have not the taste or the ability to perceive its sweetness. Oh, unregenerate hearer, you will never know how sweet the gospel is. It is impossible you should while you remain in the state you now are in. But I tell you, if you could get half a glimpse of the joy, which even the poorest Christian has, you would never rest content until you enjoyed it, too. If men have said concerning Naples, “See Naples and die,” because of its beauty, I might say to you it were worthwhile dying a thousand deaths to get a glimpse of Christ. When once your faith has perceived His beauty, you will wonder how you could have been satisfied to be blinded so long. What must it be to be forgiven all your sins, and to know it? What must it be never to be afraid of death, to be able to look forward to departing from this world as a thing to be longed for, and not to be dreaded? What must it be to be able to look up and say, “God is my Father, and I feel that I am His child”? What must be the joy and bliss of having familiar communion with God so that you are called His friends, as Abraham was of old? I wish I could set your mouths watering after these things. If you had but a little taste of them, you would long for more. But until the Lord shall grant you that taste, all we can say of the love of Christ will have no charm for you. The love which lines the chariot of salvation is not to be known by those who remain outside. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.”

And so note, next, that when the Christian stands apart from his Lord and judges by outward appearances, he cannot perceive as once he did, the loving-kindness of the Lord. Providence grows dark as a winter's day. The tried believer cries, "My wife has been taken from me! My property is melting away, my business fades, I am sick in body and weary in soul. I cannot see a trace of the love of God to me in all this." Brother, the description in the Song does not say that the chariot is plated with love on the outside, but it is paved with Love *within*—"in the midst of it." Oh that you had faith to believe that the heart and real core of every providence is love. The exterior of it may be as a thorn hedge, but sweet fruit ripens within. "Oh," you say, "but I have looked at the Bible lately, and as I have glanced over its once-cheering promises, they appear to smile at me no more. Some of the words grate very harshly on my ears, and almost condemn me." I do not wonder, for although I can, at this moment, see love in the very outside of Scripture, yet there are times when I cannot, when I can only feel as if every text thundered at me, and out of God's own mouth came heavy sentences against me. Beloved, it does not say, I repeat it, that the exterior part of this palanquin was adorned with self-apparent love, but that love was in the midst. If you stand examining the exterior of providence, and the mere letter of the word, and begin to judge and try your God, I should not wonder if little enough of love should be conspicuous to you. Look into the heart of God, and read what He has written there. When faith takes a step upward, and mounts to the inside of the chariot of grace, she finds that it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Come and sit side by side with Jesus in His chariot of grace, His bed of rest. Come and recline with Him in hallowed fellowship. There is room enough for you, and strength enough to bear your weight. Come now and be carried with Him who carried your cross. Sit down with Him, who on His hands, and on His side, bears the memorials of His dying love to you. What company you have, and what royal accommodation is provided for you! I think I sit in the chariot with the Beloved, now, and I begin to look around me. I catch a glimpse of the purple above my head, and remember the unspeakable love which bled and died for sinners. I look at the silver pillars which support the covering, and how infinite holiness stands fast, and in love to me secures my perfection. I place my foot on the golden floor of the chariot, and know that divine power is pledged by love to preserve and bear me through. I see above me, and around me, and beneath me, nothing but love—the free, unbounded love of God. Now, beloved, indulge yourselves with a glance around you for a minute. Look back to old eternity. Let your eyes peer through the mists which hide that ancient age before the ages began! What do you see there but love, "according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus or ever the earth was"? Look a little closer. See the garden of Eden, and the fall—what strikes your eyes there, but love? The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Look to the cross and at God incarnate here below. Behold Jesus living in suffering and dying in shame! Here love comes to her climax, and lays bare all her matchless charms. Look to the time of your own life. Was not love present at your birth, perfuming your first breath? Were you not nursed in love, cradled in love, and swaddled in love? Have you not, since then, even in your sinfulness, been loved with an exceedingly great and wondrous love? Did not love turn your heart of stone into flesh? Has not love dwelt in you since then, even to this day? Have not even your trials been sent in love? Blind unbelief called it severity, but look, now, as Jesus sits at your side, and say, was it not the wisest forms of love that smote you, and made you cry out in bitterness? Oh, I remember at this day nothing in the dealings of God to me but love. I sat down last night, as this text charmed my spirit, and tried to think over my whole life, if perhaps, I might light upon some unkindness of my God to me. But my solemn witness is that from the first day my life began to beat, from the first hour I knew anything of the Lord whatever, all His dealings have been love, love, love, love, love, and love alone—nothing else but love. Of my life I can and must say, "The midst thereof has been paved with love."

Look at the patterned pavement of love beneath your feet for a moment. Can't you see the Father's love—that golden mass of uncreated love, for the Father Himself, loves you. Look at Jesus' love, another diamond pavement beneath your feet. Jesus loved you to the death, with a love that many waters could not quench, nor do floods drown. Look at the love of the Spirit, too. Equally precious is the tender affection of the loving Comforter. Think how the Holy Spirit has borne with you, has striven with you, and endured your ill manners in the wilderness, and blessed you still. Look at those delightful embroideries from the divine needle—the precious promises. A thousand promises there are, but they are all love. Look down and see how all the attributes of God are engaged for you, but they are all in league

with love! Look, then, at all the providences of God towards you, at all the exercises of His grace in your heart, and you will see many and strange colors of varied beauty, all blending in one wondrous pattern of deep, unsearchable love. I cannot talk this morning, my tongue fails me, but I feel the love of Jesus in my own soul, and I pray that you may feel it in yours. This one thing be assured of, that as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, love, love, love, right on, forever and forever. The Lord who has begun to love you will never cease from doing so. The midst of the covenant of grace is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.

III. I want you to notice THE PECULIAR POSITION OF THE PAVEMENT OF LOVE DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT. It is “in the midst” of the chariot, and only from the midst is it to be seen. It is in the midst of it, and therefore, Jesus rides upon it, and His espoused ones ride upon it. It is a very simple thought, but it richly deserves to be beaten out a little. Jesus is represented here as the King in the chariot, and as the chariot is lined with love, we are taught that Jesus dwells in love. Where is He now? Among the thrones and principalities above, but He still abides in love. Love brought Him down from heaven to earth; Love conducted Him in all His weary journeys over the acres of Palestine. Love led Him to the garden, the death-sweat, and the cross. And equally, at this hour, does love attend Him. He loves in heaven as He loved below. Whatever He is doing, whatever He is feeling, whatever He is saying we know this one thing about Him, He dwells in love to us. He is in His chariot, and all around Him in that chariot is love.

The chariot was a royal one, and as the king rode along, He was reigning, but He was reigning in love, and it is so with Jesus. All things are in His hands, and He governs all things in love to His people. Heavenly principalities serve Him, and angels are His willing messengers. But there is no power which Jesus has which He does not wield in love to us. Has His power seemed, sometimes, to be exercised harshly? It is not so. It cannot be so. He reigns in love. Our Joseph is lord over all Egypt, and since Joseph loves His brothers, the good of all the land of Egypt is theirs. Jesus rules the entire world for His people’s benefit. All things are theirs, whether things present or things to come, all are theirs. Jesus reigns in love.

And Jesus rests in love. This chariot was a place for the traveler to rest in. He reclined as he was carried along. Nothing gives Jesus such rest as His love for His people. It is His solace and His joy. It is almost inconceivable by us that Jesus should derive joy from the fact that He loves us, but it is so. That text in Zephaniah which we read on Monday evening comes again to our recollection—“He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” It is a joy to Christ to love His people. His own heart finds a joy in their joy, a heaven in their heaven. To see them saved is bliss to Him. Oh, how glad we ought to be of this. Jesus rests in love.

But as the traveler rested, he also proceeded on his way. The bearers carried the palanquin from place to place, and the traveler made progress, but always with the same surroundings within his curtained bed. So Jesus, in all His glorious marching, in everything He does or is to do, still marches on in love. Read the Book of Revelation and think of the trumpets, and the falling stars, and the opened vials full of judgments, and you may well tremble. But then fall back upon the doctrine of the Scriptures, and say, “These are the goings forth of my Lord the King, but He always rides in a chariot which is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. So let Him come, with earthquake and with flame, if so He chooses, let Him come. Let Him even loose destroying angels to smite the earth, and let the whole world before His coming rock and reel, and all men’s hopes depart like visions of the night, I will not fear, for I am sure that He cannot come except in love to me. No judgment can bear wrath to His people. No overturning can overturn their hopes. No rod of iron can shatter their bliss. This is surely a thought which should make your spirit glad.

Now notice that as Jesus rides in this chariot, so do you, O believer, and at this moment your standing is upon love. You stand up in this palanquin upon love. You are accepted in the Beloved. You are not judged according to the law, but you are judged according to grace. You are not judged at the judgment seat by what you have done, but according to His abounding mercy. Recline, this morning, in the love of God. Ah, take your rest in it. As the rich man tries to find solace in his riches, and the strong man in his strength, and the great man in his fame, so stretch yourselves and lie at ease upon this glorious bed of almighty love.

And, beloved, take care that when you labor to make progress, you make it in the power and energy of His love, do not strive after virtue and grace by the law, for you will never get them. The chariot in which you rest is also the chariot in which you are to be carried forward towards perfection. Grow in grace, but keep to the cross. Cling to the love of God in Christ Jesus, for that always keeps you safe. Sleep in it, wake in it, eat, and you drink in it. Wherever you are, love surrounds you. It is in the atmosphere you breathe. It is to be found in every place, wherever you roam. You are never out of the love which is in the midst of the chariot.

These are things not to be talked of so much as to be thought over. Carry them home, and if you have leisure this afternoon, try to mark, learn, and inwardly digest this precious truth—"The midst thereof is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem."

IV. To close, DWELL ON THAT LOVE itself just for a moment. Remember it is special love. It is not for all men. There is some consolation in universal benevolence, but here we go deeper and rejoice in love for the daughters of Jerusalem. There is an electing, discriminating, distinguishing love which is settled upon a chosen people—a love which goes forth to none beside, but only to them. And it is this love which is the true resting place of the saint.

It is love undeserved, for what daughter of Jerusalem ever deserved that our glorious King should fall in love with her? It is a love, therefore, which is a theme for eternal wonder. Why did You love me, Redeemer? Why did You make a covenant of grace with me, and line that covenant with immutable love?

This love is everlasting and eternal. It never had a beginning; it never will have an end. Simply as I have stated the truth, it is a nut with heaven for its kernel. You were always loved, O believer, and you always shall be, come what may.

It is love unrivalled, for never was there such affection as that which Christ has for His chosen, love unexampled, to which none of us shall ever reach. We should seek to love as God has loved us, but to the infinite, the boundless degree, we shall never arrive. There is no love like the love of God in Christ. It is love which to us has become this day our brightest thought, our truest comfort, and our most potent incentive. Law rules the slaves of this world, but love rules the freemen of the world to come. The ungodly, if they do right after a fashion, do it from fear of punishment or hope of reward. But the true-born children of God find in the love of Christ their sole motive. They are obedient not because they are afraid of being lost—they know they never shall be, not because they hope to get to heaven by their good works—they already have heaven already by the works of another, guaranteed to them by the promise of God. They serve God out of pure gratitude for what they have received, rejoicing as they work in the service of one they love so well.

Beloved, may the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit this morning, and all the days of your lives. And O that many who have never tasted of that love may be made to long for it, that they may be made alive by it, and unto God shall be the glory. Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—SONG OF SOLOMON 3; 1 John 5.

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