

THE HEADSTONE OF THE CORNER

NO. 1420

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech You, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, send now prosperity.”
Psalm 118:22-25.

IT would be difficult, if not impossible, to fix with certainty the occasion which first suggested this Psalm. It has even been thought to be purely prophetic and rather foretelling history than narrating it. I rather incline to the opinion that some Israelite hero, chosen of God to high office in the midst of his people, had been rejected by the rulers, had passed through many struggles, some of them of the most violent kind, and at last, notwithstanding the rejection of his people and their leaders, had attained to a prominent position, no, to a chief place in the midst of the nation. The Psalm is applicable to Christ and to Him it is referred in the New Testament several times. But probably from the human point of view, it was at first intended to celebrate the victory of some chosen man of God who, despite his divine election, had been rejected by his countrymen. Providence conducted him to a crowning success and he magnified the Lord for it. In some way or other, a stone has come to be connected with several persons whose history was of this character. Remember Jacob. He flees from his father’s house because Esau threatens to kill him. He appears to be the rejected member of Isaac’s family, by whom the house would never be built up. At the end of a day’s journey he lies down with a *stone* for his pillow, and as he sweetly slumbers he sees heaven open, beholds the mystic ladder and rises assured of the love of the Almighty God. By faith thus infused into his soul, he becomes strong for his future life and so lives that now the house of Abraham and Isaac stands represented in the seed of Jacob alone, and Esau with all his dukes, has utterly passed away.

The next occurrence of the stone happens in reference to Joseph, of whom the dying Jacob said, “From thence is the Shepherd *the stone* of Israel.” He was separated from his brothers by their envy and grievously wounded by their malice. They said, “Behold, this dreamer comes,” and they sold him for a slave into the stranger’s land. From the dungeons of Egypt he climbed to the throne and became the cornerstone of Israel’s house. On his bosom his aged father could lay his head and dream as he did at Bethel. And by his power and wisdom, the shepherd family was happily built up.

Then came David, whom his elder brothers despised and even his father passed him over, until the prophet of God asked for him, that he might be anointed with oil. Out of his hand went that *stone* of Israel which laid low the pride of Philistia. Goliath must bite the ground when the stone of Israel flies from the hand of Israel’s shepherd, who was destined to be her king. He was rejected and hated by Saul so that he wandered about in the wilderness, hiding in caves and rocks until the hour came when he was called to the throne. Then the stone which the builders refused became the headstone of the corner, and he and his people confessed that it was the Lord’s doing and it was marvelous in their eyes. Be not afraid, O you persecuted ones, for you shall fulfill your destiny. It has happened again and again in history, that those who have been destined to do great things for the Lord have first of all been compelled to pass through a trying ordeal of misunderstanding and rejection. Such history repeats itself and it may do so in your instance. The speckled bird of the family, the one least beloved, often rises to take the most prominent place. Jephthah was driven out from his father’s family and yet in their distress his brethren were glad enough to make him their champion and accept him as their head. Bow your head in patience, young man, and bear whatever God or His enemies may lay upon you, for assuredly as the Lord is in you and with you, He will bring you forth and of you, too, it shall be true in your own little way, “The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the headstone of the corner.”

At this time however, we shall confine our application of these verses to our blessed Lord Himself, to whom they most evidently refer. Their meaning is focused upon Him and in reference to Him each word is emphatic. He applied them to Himself, for Matthew tells us in the 21st chapter of his gospel that our Lord said to the chief priests and Pharisees, “Did you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?” You remember also, how Peter said in the face of the crucifiers of Christ, “Be it known unto you all and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nothing of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” In his first epistle, Peter refers again to this psalm in the well-remembered words, “Why also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.” Of our own exalted Lord we are going to speak at this time and may the Spirit bear witness in our hearts to His honor.

I. First, I invite your thoughts to CHRIST REJECTED—“The stone which the builders refused.” The Lord Jesus came into this world at the fullness of time when the Messiah was expected by those devout men who waited for salvation in Israel. He came born of parents descended from that royal house from which Messiah was prophesied as coming and He was born in the very city which had been pointed out by seers of old. All details of His life in His early days corresponded with prophetic intimations and answered to the signs which the Lord had appointed. There was nothing in which He did that did not exactly fit the symbols of the sanctuary and the personal types of history. Everything which could speak cried with one voice, “Behold the Lamb of God.” He was clearly placed before the Jewish people as the stone which God would lay in Zion as the foundation of their hopes, but *they persistently refused Him*. It was not from lack of evidence, for John came prophesying concerning Him and as I have already said, John was but the last of a long list of prophets who had all pointed to Him as the Anointed of the Lord, and yet Israel rejected Him. His own miracles and teaching were more than sufficient evidence of His mission, but Israel would have none of Him. He was a stone evidently of God’s quarrying and preparing. His extraordinary birth marked Him out as differing from all the rest of mankind. His surpassing excellence and moral beauty declared Him to be destined to the highest position. His person displayed the marvelous love and wisdom of God and with half an eye, if they had willed to see it, the Jews might have perceived that He was anointed to be the cornerstone of the spiritual temple, but yet they refused Him. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” He came to those who had the oracles, but in this thing they set at nothing the oracles. He came to those who had the law and the prophets, but they were deaf to all holy testimonies and disowned Him. Alas, for the blindness of men’s hearts.

His rejection was rendered the more remarkable and the more sorrowful because *He was rejected by the builders or leaders of the nation*. “The stone which *the builders* refused.” If the common people, who were ignorant of the law, had not perceived Him to be the chosen stone, we might not have wondered. But there were men of learning and research among the people and these rejected Him. They had builders who understood spiritual architecture, or professed to do so—the scribes who studied the law and the priests who taught the people—these were the master builders, whose business it was to make the selection of the cornerstone. But these rejected our Lord. It was not only the mob of Jerusalem that rejected Christ, but the rulers led the way. True, the many cried, “Crucify Him!” but not till they were bribed by the priests, the clergy of the day, the Sadducees, the skeptical men of science, the Pharisees and ritualistic professors. These were they who sat in Moses’ seat, in whom the people had confidence, and by their scheming, the people were led to reject the cornerstone which the Lord Himself had laid.

Concerning this rejection we must also remark that it was no common one. *It was a violent and indignant rejection*. They were not content to say, “He is not the Messiah,” but they turned their hottest malice against Him. They were furious at the sight of Him. This precious stone was kicked against and rolled about with violence and all manner of ridicule was poured upon it. Nothing would content them but the blood of the man who had disturbed their consciences and questioned their pretensions. “The stone which the builders *refused*” is to be read with a heavy stress upon the word REFUSED. Peter says, “He was set at nothing of you builders.” They slandered Him in life and mocked Him in death. They

spat their accusations against Him when He was free and gave Him over to be defiled with the spit of the soldiers' mouths when He was bound. They made Him live an outcast's life and then they hung Him up to die a felon's death.

This rejection was most unreasonable. They did violence to truth and justice by their evil deed. For which of His works did they stone Him? There was nothing in His character which should have incensed them. There was nothing about Him which ought to have excited their doubts, much less their wrath. But yet they willfully and resolutely rejected Him. They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The cause, in part, was blind prejudice. They expected a king surrounded with earthly pomp and girt with physical force to break the Roman yoke and create an Israelite empire more famous than that of Solomon. And because He came as the son of a lowly virgin, robed in a peasant's dress and humbly dwelt among the sons of men in meekest fashion, therefore they refused Him. There was no real reason why He should have been refused because of His humiliation, for was not their Messiah so to come? Did not Isaiah say, "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." He agreed with the prophecies, but not with their prejudices and therefore they cried, "Away with Him. Away with Him." Those prejudices were the result of sheer ignorance, for if they had studied the word they would have seen that the Christ of God was not the Christ of their dreams. And had they searched the Scriptures they might have known that Jesus of Nazareth was the Lord of glory. They had eyes, but would not see. The light was around them, but they comprehended it not. The pride of their hearts kept them in ignorance. They did not want to know. The proud philosophic Sadducee felt sure of his ground, for he was a thinker and despised the vulgar populace. He did not wish for evidence as to the existence of angel or spirit, or of the resurrection of the dead, and therefore he scornfully rejected the man who brought life and immortality to light. The Pharisee, supremely righteous in himself, did not want to know a man who taught him that he was lost and came to be the Savior of sinners. He felt too safe already to need saving.

Thus the Ever-blessed was chased out of the world by the pride which scorns all excellence except its own. Men flung away God's dearest jewel because it outshone their own counterfeit jewelry. Nor was it pride alone, for that mother sin was surrounded with all other evils. They wanted to devour widows' houses in secret and He exposed them. They wanted to go on saying their long prayers and yet to persecute the righteous and He unmasked them. Certain of them wanted to be free-thinkers and yet to be thought orthodox and He denounced them as hypocrites. They denied the essential principles of revelation, but He came forth from the Father to bear witness of God, and therefore they utterly abhorred Him. Their sin, as it could not associate with His holiness, raised a clamor against Him and with cunning and malice they denounced, condemned and utterly rejected the stone which God had appointed to be the foundation and cornerstone of His New Jerusalem. Ah, my brethren, you know what came of it. They threw that chosen stone away and when they had removed it away from their Babel-building they thought their troubles at an end, when indeed, they had just begun. That stone was removed out of the way and yet they stumbled upon it. They stumbled to their own confusion. Yes, they stumbled to their own destruction. How broken were they by that stone at the awful siege of Jerusalem, when they and their city perished. Now, also, that stone has been lifted up into heaven by the mighty power of God and in the fullness of time it will descend upon these foolish builders with terrible effect, for upon whomever it shall fall it will grind him to powder. Even while that stone was here, they fell upon it and were broken. But when He comes a second time, He will fall upon them and woe unto them in that day. Let us not be among the company of the rejecters. Let us not consort with those who cast doubts upon the gospel of Jesus. Rather let our hearts joyfully bless God for appointing Him to be the headstone of the corner. Let us accept Him in that character and at once build upon Him—

*"Chosen of God, to sinners dear,
And saints adore the name!
We trust our whole salvation here,
Nor shall we suffer shame."*

God forbid that we should reject the testimony of God concerning His Son and so make God a liar and bring down eternal wrath upon our own heads. Our safety lies in reception, not in rejection, for to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." As for those who reject Him, we hear with trembling these words from the lips of the loving

Jesus—"But those, My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me."

II. With great delight I now pass to the second topic which is CHRIST EXALTED—"The stone which the builders refused *is become the headstone of the corner*"—that is to say, at this moment Christ has *the chief place of honor* in the building of God. He is the headstone, for He is higher than the kings of the earth. He is higher than all the opposing powers of wisdom or of superstition and He is the head over all things to His church. Glory be to His name, in the midst of His people He is above all and over all—we worship Him with rapture. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, "for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him," There is none like Him among the sons of men. In all things He has the preeminence. He that was crucified is now enthroned. He that lay in the grave now reigns in glory.

Nor is He only eminent for His position of honor, but for His *surpassing usefulness*. He is the headstone of the corner, that stone which joins two walls together and is the bond of the building. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus. It is true He is a stone in Israel's wall, but He is also a stone in the Gentile's wall. In Him is neither Jew nor Gentile distinctively, for they are both there inclusively. He has made both one. The Pharisees would have it that the wall should finish within the line of Judah's race, but not so thought our Master. His heart went forth to the other sheep which He had that were not yet of the fold. This made them wrathful, but their wrath did not prevent His accomplishing His design and now He is the bond of the building, holding Jew and Gentile in firm unity. This precious cornerstone binds God and man together in wondrous amity, for He is both in one. He joins earth and heaven together, for He participates in each. He joins time and eternity together, for He was a man of few years and yet He is the Ancient of Days. Wondrous cornerstone! You bind all of us together who are in You, so that by love of You we are built together for a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are the perfect bond, the eternal holdfast, the divine cement which holds the universe in one. Is it not written, "By Him all things consist"?

Our Lord Jesus Christ then, is brought up from all rejection and shame to which His enemies put Him, to be by usefulness and by honor, the grandest person upon the face of the earth, and all this *none the less, but all the more, because He was rejected*. He lost nothing by His enemies. They scourged His back, but they did not rob Him of that imperial purple which now adorns Him. They crowned Him with thorns, but those thorns have increased the brilliance of His diadem of light. They pierced His hands and thereby prepared them to sway an irresistible scepter of love over men's hearts. They nailed His feet, but those feet stand firm forever upon the throne of sovereignty. They crucified Him, but His crucifixion led Him to His greater honor, since He therein finished the work which was given Him to do, and now also God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. As it has been, so is it, and so shall it be. Man's opposition to the gospel will not interfere with it one single whit, but the eternal purposes of Jehovah shall be fulfilled. Our adversaries may mine and undermine. They may openly oppose and secretly assail. But upon this rock, even upon Christ, shall the truth and the church forever rest and no harm shall come to it. The Lord will lift the stone which the builders refused and make it to become the headstone of the corner, therefore let us not fail nor be discouraged.

Already our text has been fulfilled. Our Lord Christ was dead and buried, but His foes were desperately afraid that He would rise again and so they rolled a stone to the tomb's mouth and sealed it. But He rose for all that, and became the first fruits of them that slept, the headstone of the resurrection. His resurrection utterly defeated those who reckoned upon destroying His power. What could they do against one whom death itself could not silence? When His resurrection attested His mission, what could they say against Him? Nor was this all, for to add to His honor, He was received up into heaven. Beyond the eternal hills He rose, the gates of heaven opening at His coming. And amidst the acclamation of angels and redeemed spirits, He ascended to the highest place that heaven affords. What a change from Gabbatha and all the maltreatment of the Pavement to the sea of glass mingled with fire and to the seat of infinite majesty! Jesus has gone from the bar to the throne, and there He sits in majesty. His adversaries may grind their teeth at Him, but the King is set upon the holy hill of Zion beyond their wrath. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" Jehovah Jesus is King and none can challenge His sovereignty.

At Pentecost, too, this was fulfilled, for when His few and humble disciples were inspired by the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues of fire, all Jerusalem rang with the wonder—and then again, the despised and rejected stone was made the headstone of the corner. Very speedily throughout the known world the testimony of His name was made to sound forth till His Word had gone forth as far as the sun's utmost track and all nations beheld the light thereof. Then the gods of the heathen tottered and colossal systems of idolatry were ground to powder. Glory be unto You, O Christ! You did triumph gloriously in those first ages of Your church! That triumph is still proceeding. It will be consummated by-and-by. What confusion will take hold upon the hearts of His adversaries when He shall be revealed! He is hidden now and His people with Him, but the day draws near when He shall come a second time to be admired in all them that believe. What astonishment will then take hold upon those who refused His righteous claims. Then will they know that this is the Lord's doing, though it will be terrible in their eyes. All intelligent beings, even down to the blackest devil of hell, shall at the second advent of our Lord be obliged to confess that the stone which the builders refused has become the headstone of the corner. The Man of Nazareth shall be Lord of all before the eyes of all mankind. For that, we diligently look. I call upon you, dear brothers and sisters, this morning, to greatly rejoice in the fact which we have thus brought before you. It is a grand truth that Christ Jesus is now enthroned beyond the reach of those who rejected and despised Him—

*“Honor immortal must be paid,
Instead of scandal and of scorn
While glory shines around His head,
And a bright crown without a thorn.”*

III. Thirdly, I ask your attention to the next point, which is introduced to us by the 23rd verse. THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST IS DUE TO GOD ALONE—*“This is the Lord's doing* and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Now, this was so as a matter of history. Jesus Christ's name and work were at length, had in honor in the world, but this was due to no man's wisdom, eloquence, or power, but entirely to the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and great in might. Look, my brethren, if the Scribes and Pharisees had endorsed the claims of our Lord, it might have been said that Christianity was grafted upon the old stock of Judaism, and therefore grew with vigor. And if Pilate, or Herod, or any of the great ones, especially if the Caesar of the day had accepted it, then the following ages would have said, “Oh yes, He derived His power and was lifted to His place through the prestige of empire and the prowess of arms.” But it was not so. All the establishments on earth were against Him, rank and station despised the carpenter's Son, superstition abhorred His simplicity and spirituality, ceremonialism would have nothing to do with Him who said that the temple was to be destroyed, skepticism could not endure Him, for He gave not a jot of ground for its doubts, or food for its speculations. And the kings of the earth and the statesmen utterly derided Him, for He spoke of a kingdom which was not of this world. And yet He triumphed, and now His name is the most famous among the sons of men. This was not because poets sat waiting upon Parnassus to pour forth their loftiest lays, or because minstrels with their fingers on their harp strings, stood prepared to draw forth matchless music to celebrate His advent. No, the hymns which were composed in His honor had a lowly virgin and an equally humble matron as their authors. And the music which saluted Him was the noise of children in the streets, shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” The Son of man owes nothing of His glory to man. His elevation to the throne is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes!

And while this is true as to the past, it remains true at this day, for the gospel of Christ, whenever it spreads in the earth, owes its triumphs entirely to divine interposition. When I consider how hostile human nature is to the gospel, *the very existence of a true Church in the world is to me, a miracle.* Nor to me alone does it appear so, for it really is a superhuman work and is worked by the Lord alone. Just think of it. Why, at this very day, we have all the wisdom and power and eloquence and skill of the superstition of the world arrayed against the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Though they are agreed in nothing else, they all unite against Christ. He of the Seven Hills has nothing but maledictions for the pure gospel of Jesus and with him stand a hierarchy clothed with terrible power and a troop of Jesuits who stop at nothing. Completely organized, numerous, subtle, all-pervading, the warriors of Rome are a great host and not to be lightly thought upon. See how superstition multiplies in this land. See how the builders, appointed by the state to build up a Protestant church, are pulling it down with both hands. These are priests, clergy—God's heritage! And what are they doing? They are lifting up an idolatrous crucifix in

the place of the doctrine of the cross, setting sacraments in the place of the precious blood and preaching salvation by their own priestcraft instead of salvation by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The builders are rejecting Him and yet His cause lives on. The wise men on the other side of the house, the builders who claim to be scientific scholars and persons of advanced thought and thorough culture, these also, have their fling against the gospel. For anything I can see of their pretended depth of learning, I would recommend them to attend to their science and obtain a little more culture before they set up for teachers or they may expose their own shallowness. These boastfully wise men, these self-styled *thinking* men, are all against the gospel of Jesus. When I see the power which at the present time is enlisted on the side of doubt and skepticism, I, for my part, am astonished that anybody believes the gospel at all, and I feel that it is the Lord's doing and marvelous in my eyes. True faith is supernatural. It stands not in the wisdom of man, but in divine power. Wherever Christ is exalted, as, blessed be His name, He is in many churches, it is not because of any wit or skill or power on the part of the minister, but because the Holy Spirit is at work among the people bringing them to Christ. Do not, then, dear brethren, despond on behalf of Christ's cause. The real progress of Christianity must be supernatural! Whenever we fight with the wooden sword of reason, we may expect to be defeated, not because the gospel is against reason or contrary to it, but because it is so much above reason that we cannot comprehend it and therefore, lose power by hearing gospel truth as if it were a human discovery. If there is not working with Christianity a divine agency altogether above its reasonableness, if there is not, in fact, the Spirit of God working with it to convert men, then it will come to nothing and vanish like other systems. Our reliance must be therefore, not upon evidences which we can bring to prove the truth of the gospel, nor upon eloquence by which we may advance its claims, but upon the Eternal Spirit of God, for it is He, and He alone, who can lift the rejected stone and make it to become the headstone of the corner. It is impossible for blinded human nature to believe the truth of God. And therefore we must be born again. Gospel teachings are so humbling, so radical, so pure, so spiritual, so much above our thoughts, that nobody will accept them unless taught of God. His chosen people shall be taught of the Spirit and the rest will choose to remain in blindness. So it has been, and so it ever shall be. But, beloved, let us not tremble because of this, for despite human blindness, and the opposition of the wise, Christ must reign even to the world's end.

Did I hear a whisper that ministers are nowadays very broad and have given up the old gospel? I know it and I am not surprised. The builders are the first to reject the chosen stone. Christ owes little to preachers and some of His worst enemies are found in their ranks. Unconverted men are in too many pulpits and are seeking out many inventions to set aside the pure gospel which exalts Christ Jesus. Let them alone. The ditch is gaping for these blind guides. Our Lord can do without them. He owes His victories to Himself and to Himself alone. And therefore, let the faith of His people rest in peace, for if they will have patience, they shall see greater things than they have yet beheld. Our text says that it is not only the Lord's doing and marvelous, but it is marvelous, "*in our eyes,*" which it could not be if we did not see it. We shall see and we shall marvel. Some of us may have passed away, but you who are younger may live to see modern thought obtain supremacy over human minds. German rationalism which has ripened into Socialism may yet pollute the mass of mankind and lead them to overturn the foundations of society. Then "advanced principles" will hold carnival and free thought will riot with the vice and blood which were years ago the insignia of "the age of reason." I say not that it will be so, but I should not wonder if it came to pass, for deadly principles are abroad and certain ministers are spreading them. If it ever should be so, do not, O believers, for a single moment despair, but rest certain that the Lord is about to do a marvelous thing in the earth and that He will lift up once again the stone which the builders have again refused and cause it to become more than ever the headstone of the corner. Never dream of defeat. Be calm amid all the din of controversy, for the hand which holds the gospel must win the victory. This is the Lord's doing and we shall see it.

IV. Let us now notice that THE EXALTATION OF THE REJECTED CHRIST COMMENCES A NEW ERA. For what says the 24th verse? "*This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*" We date from our Lord's resurrection, even as the Jews of old counted from the night wherein they went out of Egypt. What is this day which the Lord has made? I reply first, it is *the day of the gospel*. Through our Lord's exaltation pardon for the guilty is freely preached among all nations and whoever believes in Him has everlasting life. Now is Christ exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins. Now is He on the throne of power that He may be able to save to the utter-

most them that come to God by Him. Let us rejoice and be glad in Him. How can we rejoice and be glad in Him except by believing in Him? Come, let us believe the gospel, the gospel of the once rejected, but now exalted Savior. Let us put our trust in Him and then let us sing for joy of heart because we have a royal Savior, an exalted Savior, an almighty Savior in whose hands our souls are safe. The era of the gospel ought to be a time of gladness, for its favors, are rich, its light is clear, its promises are abundant and its truth is certain. To be unhappy now that Jesus reigns is to be ungrateful. It is a royal feast. Let us eat to the full and so honor the King and bless ourselves.

What day is this which the Lord has made? Why, in the next place, it is *a Sabbath day*, the beginning of a long line of Sabbaths. The day in which our Lord Jesus rose from the dead is now sacred to rest and holy joy. Let us keep it with reverent love and bless God for making it—

*“This is the day the Lord has made,
He calls the hours His own.
Let heaven rejoice, let the earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne!
Today He rose and left the dead
And Satan’s empire fell!
Today the saints His triumphs spread,
And all His wonders tell.”*

The world calls the Sabbath *Sunday*, do not let us turn it into Cloud-day. Certain good Christian people look upon the Lord’s Day as a season so solemn that it can only be properly kept by being as dreary as possible. Draw down the blinds, darken the room, chide the children, cherish every smile, now we are getting Sabbatic. Let us go up to the house of prayer like convicts exercising in the prison yard and there let us be as decorously miserable as possible. Let the preacher be as dull and as monotonous as though he had no subject to preach about but death and destruction and must preserve an air of melancholy, or none would think him gracious. Such is not the teaching of our Master, nor is it according to His mind and spirit. Herbert well says of the Sabbath—

*“You are a day of mirth,
And where the weekdays trail on ground,
Your flight is higher, as your birth.”*

It should be “a day most calm, most bright,” fit to be called, “the endorsement of supreme delight.” It is a time of the singing of birds, for the winter of our Lord’s humiliation is over and He has risen from the dead. Today we celebrate the glory of Christ in the highest heavens, as the elect of God and the cornerstone of His church. Surely it ill becomes us to go about with our hands upon our loins as if we mourned His victory and begrudged His honor. No, let us clap our hands with exultation. “The Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.”

Again, “This is the day which the Lord has made.” The resurrection of Christ commences *an era of triumph*. We have spoken of the gospel day and the Sabbatic day, but it is also a day of victories. As Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so will His truth continually rise from the sepulcher into which men may cast it. As He triumphed over the powers of death and darkness, so will His gospel triumph over all opposition. Whenever at any time your hearts are heavy, I would bid you stand at the open tomb of Christ and remember that He rose. And if He could not be held by the bands of death, certainly neither He nor His gospel can be held by any other bands. His adversaries thrust His gospel into the tomb again. They proclaim that the old doctrines are ineffectual, but as surely as Jesus our Lord lives they shall see the truth revive again. Walk in patience, for the vision will not tarry. The day comes when in yet greater power the gospel shall renew its youth and the world shall assuredly know that the Lord has done it. Let us rejoice and be glad that we live in an era bright with victories of the right and the true. We may have to fight for them and wait for them, but they will surely come and Christ shall reign forever and ever. I would to God that the thought of the exalted Christ would be the beginning of days to some of you. This day began with sunlight but at this hour it deepens into gloom. The skies are overcast and a tempest is hurrying up. I trust that with my dear hearers it may be the absolute reverse, that if you began this morning amid clouds of doubt and showers of tears, you may see Christ exalted in the highest heaven, because He has offered for you His great atoning sacrifice, and may you look to Him and find clear shining after the rain, a great calm after a great storm.

V. I close by saying that THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST SUGGESTS A PRAYER. The 25th verse supplies us with it. “*Save now, I beseech You, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, send now prosperity.*” First, it is a prayer *for salvation*. It may mean, “God save the King: may Jesus live forever,” and in that sense we would make the heavens ring with it. But we will take it this morning, to be a prayer for the salvation of men. Since Christ is the exalted and victorious Savior, let us beseech Him to save all those who are around us. Save them, Lord! Save them all! Save them now! Put it in the present tense. Ask for a display of the present saving power of our exalted Head. O Christ Jesus, Prince and Lord, save the sinners in Zion! We beseech You save those who occupy these pews Sabbath after Sabbath and hear about You, but do not know You. Save, too, the strangers that are within Your gates and are strangers to You as well as to us. Save the careless, good Lord! Save the anxious! Save the seekers! By Your glory at the Father’s side, we beseech You, save men! Do you believe that Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God? If you do, all things are possible with Him and He has promised to hear prayer. Hear me then, you thousands of Israel, as I entreat you now to breathe one hearty unanimous prayer to this effect—“Save now, O Lord, we beseech You.” Put the name of your child to the prayer if you please, or that of your wife, or father, or sister, or brother, but do put up the prayer to Him who is enthroned on purpose to save. Save now, O Lord. You are no more despised and rejected. Unveil Your glory by saving men. You could save even in Your agony. On the cross you saved a dying thief. But now in glory, You have mightier power. Therefore, O Savior, save now. Will you not persistently urge that petition, O you who know His readiness to hear? Sinners, will you not pray thus for yourselves?

Here now, as we sit together in this dense gloom, so unusual in the month of June, let us feel that the shadow of the Eternal is brooding over us, that the Almighty is now covering us with His wings. Do you not feel near to Him? Be sure of this, He is very near to you. Call upon Him while He is near. In all probability we shall in a few moments, hear His majestic voice rolling in thunder through the sky, and before long we shall see the flash of His glittering spear. Let all this deepen our reverence and prompt us to entreat Him now to save us. The God that thunders at His pleasure is near. Bow before Him and trust in His Son, Christ Jesus, and let the prayer go up, “Save now.” Do not wait for tomorrow, nor even until the storm has passed over, but *now*, even now, seek His salvation.

The other half of the prayer is for *prosperity*. “O Lord, send now prosperity.” This is what we continually need in this church. The prayer is in harmony with the whole passage. Since, Lord, You have lifted the chief stone into its place, be pleased to raise up other stones of Your temple into their places. Fit them, one upon another, and send a prosperous building up. Lord, You have conquered all the foes of Christ, come and conquer the foes of your church today. Lord, You did gather out a people to His praise and build up a church in the first centuries of Christianity and then Your Son Jesus was gloriously the corner and headstone. Come again and build up Your own church throughout all the lands, a church in which the Lord Jesus shall be exalted even to the highest.

“Send now prosperity.” I pray you, beloved, join in this prayer. Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and prosperity, for they that love her and her peace still have great happiness. Join in the supplication to the once rejected but now exalted covenant Head of the church and the Lord will bless you for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 118

HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—353, 118 (VERSION 2, 3).

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