

HARVEST JOY

NO. 2265

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 17, 1892
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 6, 1890

“Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.”

Isaiah 9:3

NOTICE that I make a correction in the version from which I am reading. The Authorized Version has it, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.” This is not consistent with the connection, and the Revised Version has very properly put it, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy.” I have not any learning to display, but I think I could show you, if this were the proper time, how the passage came to be read with a “not,” and I could also prove to you that, in this instance, the Revisers were right in making their alteration.

Tonight, there are about eighty persons who have confessed Christ before the church, and have been baptized, who are to be received into our fellowship, and we feel very grateful for this large addition to our members, and all the more so, because it is no strange thing, but month by month, all the year round, they continue to come, though not in such large numbers as at this time. God be thanked for thus blessing us! We cannot allow these occasions to pass over without joying before the Lord as men rejoice when they gather in their sheaves of corn.

To bring out your joy, think of how we would feel if we did not have an increase in the church. I know churches, and you know churches, where very few are ever added to them. The good old people seem quite content to be very few. Their notion is that the way to heaven is very narrow, as indeed it is, and that therefore they must not expect many to find their way.

I remember a church where the good old deacons used to say of the converts, “Summer them and winter them. Keep them out till we have tried them for a very long time.” It came to pass, after the process of “summering and wintering,” that a great many of them never came forward at all. Though they were very excellent people, they never summoned courage enough to join such a church. Did you ever hear a farmer say of his wheat, “Summer it and winter it, and then take it into the barn”? No, farmers are not such fools. But these good men were so very wise that they became otherwise, so they said, “Keep the corn out in the field, else you will bring in some poppies, or some corn flowers and we do not want them. Keep the converts out of the church till you are sure that there are no hypocrites among them.”

Well, dear friends, we are not at all of this mind. We try to use every caution, and great prudence, and our friends do not come into this church without experiencing an examination, some of them even think it to be an ordeal, yet I find that the more difficult it is to get into a church, the more people want to come into it, and whenever the barriers are lowered, and you tell people that they may come without any test as to the state of their souls, nobody cares to come.

Well, we have taken pains and care, and have sought only to welcome the worthy, that is, those who are trusting in Jesus, yet we have had a great number come. But suppose that we had none. Well, I hope every Christian man and woman here would be troubled about it. I should not wonder if the question arose, “Had we not better put somebody else on the platform?” That somebody who is now here would

be the first to say, "If I am doing no good, let somebody else come and try, for it would be a sad and sickening business to be fishing for souls, and never catching anything."

Last winter, at Menton, I went out in a boat, where I was assured that there were shoals of fish, and I had a line, I should think it was a hundred and fifty feet long, and after waiting hour after hour, and never feeling the fish bite, I gave up the useless occupation. I think every minister is bound to give up the spiritual fishery in any particular place if, after many days' toil, he has caught nothing for Christ. Rachel says, "Give me children, or I die." Christ's servant says, "Give me converts, or I die." Indeed, we are dead as far as our ministry is concerned unless God blesses it.

We also feel that we ought to be glad when others are joined to the church because we look back, with exquisite pleasure, upon our own joining it. I remember the trouble it cost me to join the church. I think I went to see the pastor some four or five days running, he was always too busy to see me, till at last I told him it did not matter, for I would go to the church meeting, and propose myself as a member, and then he, all of a sudden, found time to see me, and so I managed to get into the church, and confess my faith in Christ.

Oh, dear friends, that was one of the best days' work I ever did, when I openly declared my faith in Christ, and united myself with His people! I think many here could say the same, they remember when they united with the people of God, and publicly avowed their faith. You do not regret it brethren, do you? I am sure you feel that it was a happy day when you could say—

*"Tis done! the great transaction's done:
I am my Lord's, and He is mine."*

By the peace of mind which has come to us from joining with the people of God after believing in Christ, we feel glad to see other young soldiers stooping to take up the cross of Christ, and following Him, "without the camp, bearing his reproach."

I. Looking at our text, I notice in it, first, A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION.

If you look carefully at the passage, you will soon see it, "*Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy.*"

Observe, first, that *conversion must be the Lord's work*. The only multiplication of the church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends, "Thou hast multiplied the nation." If we add to our churches by becoming worldly, by taking in persons who have never been born again, if we add to our churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the life of the worldling, our increase is worth nothing at all, it is a loss rather than a gain. If we add to our churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions, rather than by explaining the truth to the understanding, if we add to our churches otherwise than by the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Christ Jesus, the increase is of no worth whatever.

A man picked himself up from the gutter, and rolled up against Mr. Rowland Hill one night as he went home, and he said, "Mr. Hill, I am pleased to see you, sir. I am one of your converts." Rowland said, "I thought it was very likely you were. You are not one of God's converts, or else you would not be drunk."

There is a great lesson in that answer. My converts are no good, Rowland Hill's converts could get drunk, but the converts of the Spirit of God, those who are really renewed in the spirit of their mind, by a supernatural operation, these are a real increase to the church of God. "Thou hast multiplied the nation." Pray hard that the Lord may continue to send us converts. He never sends the wrong people. However poor they may be, however illiterate, if they are converted, as they will be if the Lord sends them, they are the very people that we want. May God send us thousands more!

The text also teaches us, with a word of discrimination, that *conversion must be such as the Lord describes* in this chapter, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." When God brings men to the church,

they are the people who have undergone a very remarkable change. They have come out of darkness, palpable, horrible, into light, marvelous and delightful. God sends no other than these. If you are not changed characters, if you are not new creatures in Christ Jesus, if you cannot say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," the church cannot receive you as you are, and God has not sent you.

Now, who can turn us from darkness unto light but God? Who can work this great miracle within the heart? Darkness of heart is very hard to move. Who but God can make the eternal light burst through the natural darkness, and turn us from the power of Satan unto God?

Next, *conversion must have a distinct relation to Christ*. Look down the chapter, just a little way, and you come to this wonderful passage, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We want converts who know this Christ, men and women to whom He is "Wonderful," to whom He has become the "Counselor." We want no additions to the church of those who cannot call Him "The mighty God, The everlasting Father." We want men and women to whom Christ has become "The Prince of Peace." If these are added to us, the church grows exceedingly. If others are added, they do but increase our burden, they become our weakness, in many cases they become our disgrace.

Dear hearers, you know whether you are trusting Christ or not. If you are, come and confess Him. If you are not, weep in secret places, and cry to God the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to you as the Wonderful, Counselor, and The mighty God, and then, when you know Him as your Savior, come and join yourself to His people, and God will, in your case, have multiplied the nation.

Once more, about this discrimination, *the joy must be such as God gives*. The text says, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy." The joy that we ought to have tonight, the joy of any growing church, will be joy such as God gives. That is the kind of joy we desire to have. If anybody wishes to see the church grow that we may excel other churches, that is not the joy that God gives. If we like to see converts because we are glad that our opinions should be spread, God does not give that joy. If we crave converts that we may steal them from other people, God does not give that joy, if it be a joy.

I do not think God is the lover of sheep stealers, and there are plenty such about. We do not desire to increase our numbers by taking Christian people away from other Christian communities. No, the joy which God gives us is clear, unselfish delight in Christ being glorified, in souls being saved, in the truth being spread, and in error being baffled. God give us a joy over those who are added to us, which shall be pure, and Christlike, and heavenly! Oh, that He might increase such joy! I think that He *has* increased it.

Did you ever worship in a place where there were more pews than people? Did you ever go to a church or chapel where the preacher could preach upon anything except the Gospel of Christ, where you might hear about anything except the precious blood of Christ? That, the minister would be sure not to mention. Then, I think I see you go grumbling down the aisle after every service, or you sit there, and look up at the pulpit, and long for what you never hear, till the Sabbath becomes more wearisome than any day of the week.

Oh, dear! Few people, little to be got, very little ever given, a terrible "starvation camp," where every man looks at his fellow, and wonders who is going to die next. Well, now, we ought to thank God that it is not so with us. Look on this company gathered here tonight. Think of the congregation we had this morning, remember the deep attention, and think in how many cases God has blessed the Word to the hearers. I never, personally, felt so weak, or felt as great a burden in preaching, yet I never had so large a blessing, there are more converts than ever. Glory be to God, this is the kind of joy that comes from Him, a joy in Him, in His Word, in His power, that out of weakness makes His servant strong.

So much by way of discrimination.

II. Now, secondly, notice a WORD OF DESCRIPTION, which is the main part of the text.

The joy of the church in receiving converts may be compared to the joy in harvest. In all nations, the time of reaping the corn, and gathering it into the garner, has been regarded as a festival. What is the joy of harvest?

Well, it is *a joy which we ought to expect*. The husbandman expects a harvest. He says, "It is so many weeks to harvest." He sows his seed with a view to harvest. He hires men to clear out the weeds with a view to a harvest. He has a barn, and he has a threshing machine, all with a view to harvest. Well, now, every church should be looking out for a spiritual harvest.

One said to me, once, "I have preached for several years, and I believe God has blessed the Word, but nobody ever comes forward to tell me so." I said to him, "Next Lord's-day say to the people, 'I shall be in the vestry, when the sermon is finished, to see friends who have been converted.'" To his surprise, ten or twelve came in, and he was quite taken aback, but of course, quite delighted. He had not looked for a harvest, so of course he did not get it.

You know the story I tell of my first student, Mr. Medhurst. He went out to preach on Tower Hill, Sunday after Sunday. He was not then, my student, but one of the young men in the church. He came to me, and said, "I have been out preaching now for several months on Tower Hill, and I have not seen one conversion." I said to him, rather sharply, "Do you expect God is going to bless you every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh! no, sir, I do not expect Him to do that." "Then," I replied, "that is why you do not get a blessing."

We ought to expect a blessing. God has said, "My Word shall not return to me void," and it will not. We ought to look for a harvest. He who preaches the Gospel with his whole heart, ought to be surprised if he does not hear of conversions, and he ought to begin to say in his heart, "I will know the reason why," and never stop till he has found it out. The joy of the harvest is what we have a right to expect.

The joy of harvest, next, is *a joy which has respect for former toil*. He is bound to rejoice in a harvest who has sorrowed in ploughing, and in the sowing of the seed, in watching his crop when it was in the ear, and when frost, and blight, and mildew threatened to destroy it.

Brothers and sisters, many of us here can rejoice with the joy of harvest, because in those converted to Christ, we see the fruit of our soul's travail. I thank God first, and I thank many of you next, that when I sit to see inquirers, I find that I am very generally the spiritual grandfather of those who come, rather than their father in the faith, for I find that you, whom God gave me in years past are, many of you, diligent in seeking the souls of others. In the case of many who join the church, their conversion is due to this sister and to that, to this brother and to that, rather than distinctly to my ministry. I am very glad to have it so.

During the last two days I have spoken to two friends, both of whom said to me, "I am your spiritual grandchild." One from America said so this morning. I asked, "How is that?" The answer was, "Mr. So-and-so, whom you brought to Christ, came out to America, and he brought me to Christ." You who have had any part in the conversion of these eighty-two, who are to be received tonight, will rejoice, in proportion as you have sighed, and prayed, and been beaten, and foiled, and disappointed, in that very proportion you will rejoice with the joy of harvest.

But next, it is *a joy which has solid ground to go upon*. I do not know of a more joyful occasion than when young men and women, and for the matter of that, old men and women, too, are brought to confess Christ, and to unite with His people. It is a very joyful thing to attend a wedding, but it is always a speculation as to how it will turn out, but when you come to see a soul yield itself to Christ, there is no speculation about that, you have a blessed certainty.

Oh, I think the angels sing more sweetly than ever as they hear a man, or woman, or child say, "I trust in Jesus. I confess His name." When we know and believe that true faith in Christ means present salvation, there is a great joy about that.

I heard, the other day, of some preachers who say that there is no such thing as present salvation, and though they constantly preach, they tell the people, every now and then, that they must be saved when they come to die, but there is no such thing as being saved now. I should like to present those brethren

with a little “Catechism for the Young and Ignorant,” which Mr. Cruden was known to give away, for, if they are not “young,” they certainly must be “ignorant” of the first principles of the faith. You are saved, dear hearer, if you have believed in Christ Jesus. You are saved even now. If you were not, I do not see any reason why we should rejoice over you with the joy of harvest.

Moreover, we believe that, if you have trusted Christ, you will be saved eternally. Angels do not rejoice prematurely over repentant sinners. They never have to say to one another, “Gabriel, Michael, you made a very terrible mistake the other day. You rejoiced in the presence of God over that man who, after all, has gone down to hell. You rang the bells too soon.” Angels do not do that. Jesus gives to His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand. Therefore, we feel that the confession of Christ is, in itself, a thing to rejoice over, and the immediate salvation that goes with it, and the eternal salvation that is included in it, warrant us in rejoicing with the joy of the harvest.

Moreover, this is *a joy which looks to the future*. Men rejoice in the harvest because they remember that all through the winter, they will feed upon the food which they are now gathering. The poorest man in London has reason to be thankful for a good harvest, for it will help to make food cheaper. We are to enjoy in days to come what we gather in the harvest time. There are sixteen girls coming from the Orphanage to join the church, and I am rejoicing in my heart over sixteen women who will, I trust, during a long life glorify Christ, sixteen matrons in the church who shall be Deborahs, Dorcasses, and Phoebes, or whoever else you may like to think of among holy women.

The boys also who come, however young they may be, and however little they may appear in some men’s eyes, we cannot tell to what they will grow. I may be receiving tonight a Livingstone, or a Moffat, or a Williams, or a Whitefield, or a Wesley, or some other servant of God, who, in some sphere or other, will serve Him right nobly.

Beloved, some of us will soon be gone. There are some here who are older than I am, who, in the natural course of things, will soon sleep in the cemetery. Are you not glad to see others coming forward? They will “hold the fort” when you can no longer stand upon its walls, and on account of this hope of the future, I rejoice with the joy of harvest.

This is *a joy in which many may join*, for in the harvest, anybody who likes may rejoice. There is the proprietor of the field, he rejoices. How greatly Christ rejoices! There are laborers, they may shout as they bring home the loads, they know what that field of wheat has cost. Let us, who are working for Jesus here, have the joy of harvest. The on-lookers, too, as they go by, see the harvest gathered in, will stop, and even give a shout over the hedge. If you are not yourself saved, you might be glad that other people are. Even if you are not yourself going to heaven, rejoice that others are choosing the blessed road. I invite even you to come, and share with us the joy of harvest.

The gleaner, Ruth, over yonder says, “I have stooped many times. I have almost broken my back over the work, and I have only picked up this little handful.” I know you, sister, and I am pleased that you should bring even one to Christ. I know you, my brother, and I rejoice with you that you should bring even one child to the Savior. Though you be but a gleaner, join heartily with us tonight in the joy of harvest.

Then something happens in our harvest that cannot happen in the common harvest, for the harvested ones rejoice. Sheaves cannot sing, ears of wheat cannot lift up their voices, but in our harvest the happiest of all are those who are called by divine grace. And while they are happy, we are happy, and all are happy, the angels hovering over the assembly tonight will mark this the first Sabbath in July, and it shall be a red-letter day even to them, so many shall tonight, for the first time, come to the table of their Lord, and here confess His name.

I have a great deal more to say, but our time is nearly gone. I can only say that this is *a joy which has its moderating tone*. “Why!” say you, “what is that?” The farmer says, “I have got that load in very well, but I wonder how it will thresh out.” I often think of you who are added to the church, and I think that you are first-rate people, and that I never saw better, but I wonder how you will turn out when you get

inside the church. There are members of the church whom I never hear of as doing anything for Christ, they may be working away quietly, but I am afraid that some are not. I know that there are some in this church who are no better than they should be, indeed, that is true of us all, but there are some who are not what they ought to be, as to practical service for Christ. We get many passengers to ride in the coach, but not so many to pull it, plenty of people to eat the fruit, but not so many to plant fresh trees. Yet I say not even this very heavily, or with any great emphasis, for the bulk of the members of this church are earnestly engaged in the service of God, for which I bless His name. Still there is the question concerning the harvest, "How will it thresh out?"

There is another question, How much of it will be found to be real wheat in the last great day? Ah, we may judge our very best, and examine most carefully, but there always will be the goats with the sheep, and tares with the wheat, and that is the dash of bitterness in our cup of rejoicing. God grant that we may not have many added to us who will deteriorate instead of growing better! How will they stand at the last great day? "Well," says one, "I am glad that you make that remark, I have always been opposed to revivals, because they bring in so many, and many of the converts fall away."

Dear friends, do you remember Mr. Fullerton's answer to that? I thought it was as good and as complete as it was humorous. He said that when persons say that they do not like revivals because certain of the converts afterwards turn back, they are like his countryman, who picked up a sovereign, but when he went with it to the bank, it turned out to be a light sovereign, and he only got eighteen shillings for it. Mark you, he found it, so the eighteen shillings were clear gain.

Some time after, he saw another sovereign lying in the road, and he would not pick it up, "for," said he, "I lost two shillings by the one I picked up the other day, I shall not take you up, very likely I should only get eighteen shillings for you." So he passed on, and left it where it was. I cannot imagine an Irishman being so unwise, certainly, no Scotchman would have been, and I think no Englishman.

However, that is the style of un wisdom of a man who says that, at a revival, so many come in, and then so many turn out to be bad. Well, but those who remain are a clear gain, and you ought to desire to have a like gain again and again, you will get rich through such losses, if God will continue to give them to you. However, I hope that I shall not have any light sovereigns tonight. Yet, if these converts do not turn out to be twenty shillings in the pound, but only eighteen shillings, I will be greatly rejoiced to have the eighteen shillings, and God shall have all the glory.

I think that I will here pause, though there is another division of my discourse, and in closing, I will ask four questions.

First, *What say we of those who never sow?* Well, they will never reap, they will never have the joy of harvest. Am I addressing, in this great assembly, any professing Christians who never sow, never speak a word for Christ, never call at a house, and try to introduce the Savior's name, never seek to bring children to the Savior, take no part in the Sunday school, or any other service for Christ? Do I address some lazy man here, spiritually alive only for himself?

Oh, poor soul, I would not like to be you, because I doubt whether you can be spiritually alive at all! Surely, he who lives for himself is dead while he lives, and you will never know the joy of bringing souls to Christ, and when you get to heaven, if you ever do get there, you will never be able to say, "Here am I, Father, and the children thou hast given me." You will have to abide eternally alone, having brought no fruit unto God in the form of converts from sin. Shake yourselves up, brothers and sisters, from sinful sloth.

"Oh!" says one, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, I will tell you your name, it is Cain. You are your brother's murderer, for every professing Christian, who is not his brother's keeper, is his brother's killer, and be you sure that it is so, for you may kill by neglect quite as surely as you may kill by the bow or by the dagger!

Next, *What say we to those who have never reaped?* Well, that depends. Perhaps you have only just begun to sow. Do not expect to reap before God's time. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." There is a set season for reaping. But if you have been a very long time sowing, and you have never

reaped, may I ask the question, Where do you buy your seed? If I were to sow my garden year by year, and nothing ever came up, I should change my seeds-man. Perhaps you have bad seed, my dear friend, and have not sown the Gospel pure and undiluted. You have not brought it out in all its fullness. Go to the Word of God, and get “seed for the sower” of a kind that will feed your own soul, for it is “bread for the eater,” when you sow that kind of seed, it will come up.

Next, *What shall I say to those who know the Lord, but have never confessed Him.* What shall I say to you? Well, I do not think that I will say what I think, but I think very seriously about persons who have been converted, and yet never tell the man who was the means of saving them that it has happened. “Well,” says one, “I do not think that I shall confess Christ, the dying thief did not confess Him, did he? He was not baptized.” No, but he was a dying thief, recollect, and if you are not baptized, I think that you will be a living thief, for you will rob God of His glory, and you will rob His servant also of the comfort which he ought to receive.

Our wages are to hear that souls are saved, and if we do not hear of it, we are robbed of our wages. You muzzle the ox that treads out the corn if you allow a man to toil and labor, and you get good from his service, and yet you give him no return by way of encouragement. Come out, you who have hitherto hidden away like cowards! Men or women, if you love Christ, and have never confessed Him, come out straight away, and be not ashamed to say, “I am a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb.” May the great Captain of our salvation force you to do this right speedily!

Once more, *What say we to those who do confess Christ, and who are going to confess Him tonight?* Well, we say this, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou outside?” Beloved, when you do come in, keep your garments unspotted from the world. Come in with a true heart and a reverent spirit, with this prayer upon your lips, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” May none of you who are tonight gathered into the barn turn out to be mere weeds dried in the sun! The Lord save you, and keep you, and may you remember that the vows of the Lord are upon you, and may you never, in any way, dishonor that great name by which you are henceforth to be named!

God bless every one of this great mass of people! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” for “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” God save all of us from that fearful doom, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 49:13-26

Verse 13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

When God blesses His church, He blesses the world through her. Hence, heaven and earth are invited to be glad in the gladness of the church of God. Oh, that God would visit this church, nay, He has already done so, and I feel inclined to cry out, as the text does, “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people.”

14. *But Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

We often judge contrary to the truth, and when God is blessing us, we dream that He has forgotten us. Oh, wicked unbelief, cruel unbelief! It robs God of glory, it robs us of comfort. It snatches the song out of our mouth, and fills our soul with groaning, “Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.”

15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee.*

The child is in a condition in which it reminds the mother of itself, her sucking child, her own child. Can she forget it? It is not according to nature—

*“Yet, ’ saith the Lord, ‘should nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,
Sion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love.”*

What is true of God’s church as a whole, is true of every member of it. If any of you think that God has passed over you, one of His believing children, you think what is untrue. He cannot do it. It would be contrary to His nature. As long as He is God, He must remember His people.

16. *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;*

How appropriately Christ can say this when He looks on the nail prints, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands”! As I said, this morning, Jesus can give nothing, He can take nothing, He can do nothing, He can hold nothing, without remembering His people, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” How I love that verse of Toplady’s hymn that speaks of this blessed truth!—

*“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress’d on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace:*

*Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

16-17. *Thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste;*

There shall be many of them. Converts shall be added to the church in great numbers. They shall hurry up, they shall not be long in coming. Very often they delay too long. The promise is, “Thy children shall make haste.”

17. *Thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.*

I wish this were carried out. If it were, many of the churches of Christ, which are plagued with false doctrine and worldly habits, which are laying them waste, would be delivered from those curses. The enemies outside the walls, however malicious they are, will never be so mischievous as the traitors inside the fortress. Save Troy from the wooden horse, and save Zion from the traitors in her midst, that seek to do her harm.

18. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.*

There is a great company coming. The church is going to be increased. Have faith in God. We are not going to receive them now by ones and twos, we thank God we receive them by tens and scores. They are coming by hundreds and by thousands, let us expect them. By faith, let us see them even now coming even.

(It is remarkable that this sermon and exposition, which were selected long ago for publication this month, should be issued just as the Tabernacle church is again having a large ingathering of converts. Those who have read the sermons regularly, have been struck with the singular appropriateness of several of them, either to the condition of the Tabernacle church, or the general state of the churches of our land. A notable instance of this fact is described in the “Personal Notes” of *The Sword and the Trowel* for July. Many can see the overruling hand of the Lord even in the order in which the sermons have been published.)

18. *As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.*

What an ornament to a church, her converts are! These are our jewels. We care nothing for gorgeous architecture or grand music in the worship of God. Our true building is composed of our converts, our best music is their confession of faith. May God give us more of it!

19-21. *For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?*

Sometimes a church is brought very low, there are no additions, there is no unity, everything is breaking up, and going to pieces. When God visits that church, what a change is seen! Then people come flocking to it, and the church wonders whence the converts came. May the Lord make us wonder in that fashion! It will take a great deal to astonish us, after all these years of mercy, yet the Lord can do it. It may be He will make these latter days to be better than the former. Though we have had nearly forty years of blessing together, He may yet increase it, and give us to rejoice yet more and more.

22. *Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.*

We do not mind how they are brought if they do but come, some in the arms, and some after the Oriental method of putting the child on the shoulder. When God lifts up His hand, great wonders of mercy and grace are wrought.

23. *And kings shall be thy foster fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers:*

It will take a long time before they learn that art, for kings and queens have generally been destroyers of the church of Christ. Those will be grand days when kings shall be the nourishers of the church, and queens her nursing mothers.

23. *They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet;*

I have heard the first part of this verse quoted as an argument for the union of church and State, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." I have not the slightest objection, if they will bow down to the church "with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet." What is proposed to us is that the church should bow down to the State, with her face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of the feet of the State, by becoming obedient to rules and regulations made by princes and parliaments. This is not according to the mind of God, nor according to the heart of His people.

23. *And thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

If we wait for Christ, for His coming, for the help which He brings, for the salvation that is wrought by Him, we shall not be ashamed.

24-26. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith 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 that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee 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 thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*

The mighty may hold their prey with a strong hand, but there is a stronger hand that will deliver the captives. It is JEHOVAH, the Savior, the Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob, who says, "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." Here is a divine promise for every parent to plead, "I will save thy children." May the Lord give you grace to claim that promise, even now, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 1004

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