

“CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN”
NO. 2284

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”
2 Samuel 23:4.

WHAT a blessing it is to the country if, at certain seasons, we have a time of clear shining after the rain! Under some circumstances, nothing but sunshine will save the crops that are ready to be reaped, and there will be great loss to the farming interest, and, indeed, to us all, unless we have the sunshine when it is needed. We must never neglect to pray to the Lord who alone can give, to the natural world, clear shining after rain.

Our text, however, has a higher meaning than this. These words occur in David’s description of a fit, true and wise ruler. All rulers have not been fit to rule. Indeed, in David’s day, and in most Oriental countries at the present time, the King, the Sultan, the Emperor, the Shah, all rule for themselves. Their one great business is to extort all the taxes they can from the people and to give them as little as possible in return. To fleece the sheep is the great business of an Oriental shepherd—to feed them does not seem to enter into his mind. But David says that where rulers were wise, just, and upright, their countries flourished. A good ruler, especially in the East, where he had everything in his own hands when he came to the throne, was like “a morning without clouds,” and the people round him grew like the grass in times when, after heavy showers of rain, the sun looks forth with cheerful rays and warms the earth into verdure. We may be thankful, dear friends that we do not know what despotic rule means, for, good as it may occasionally happen to be, it may also be intolerably bad. Let other lands have what masters they will, but let us be free and our own masters, as we still are, thanks to the gracious providence of God that has smiled upon us.

The beautiful simile by which David sets forth the rule of a good king, I will first take out of its connection and look at it for other purposes. And then I will put it back into its connection and use it as David used it, only in a higher sense. The beautiful picture that he draws is produced by a combination—first rain, and then, clear shining after rain—and the most flourishing condition of spirituality is produced by the same two causes! It comes as the result of a combination of rain and sunshine. We shall never rise to the highest spiritual state by having all rain and no sunshine. Although we may prefer it, we shall never attain to the fullest fruit-bearing by having all sunshine and no rain. God puts the one over against the other, the dark day of cloud and tempest against the bright day of sunshine and calm—and when the two influences work together in the soul, as they do in the natural world, they produce the greatest degree of fertility and the best condition of heart and life.

I intend to use the text in four ways. First, I shall show you how the “clear shining after rain” is manifested *in the heart of the convert*. In the second place, I shall point out to you how this “clear shining after rain” often produces the best condition of things *in the soul of the believer*. Thirdly, I shall prove to you that our text makes a very happy combination *in the ministry of the Word*. And, in closing, I shall speak to you about the “clear shining after rain” *in the ages to come*.

I. I shall begin by showing you how the “clear shining after rain” is manifested IN THE HEART OF THE CONVERT.

When a man is truly converted, do you know how it is manifested? All conversions are not alike; there is a very great difference between them. Some are very definite—you can tell to a minute when the man is converted. Others are very indistinct—there is a long previous preparatory process and you cannot say exactly when the man turned to God. If you get up tomorrow morning and do not look at the Almanac, but look toward the east and take a pencil and try to mark down exactly when the sun rises, I

think it is highly probable that you will not manage the task correctly. On an extremely clear and bright morning, you might tell, to a second, when the rim of the sun appeared above the horizon, but we do not often have clear, bright mornings nowadays. We have not seen the sun much, lately and, probably, you would find that he was up before you had made the pencil mark—and most likely you would learn that he was up before you had discovered when he rose!

So it is often in the workings of divine grace. Some men have the light of God, but they cannot tell when the light first came to them. Let none of you imagine that you are not converted because you do not know the hour when it occurred! Otherwise, you would be as foolish as I should be if I said to some old lady, “How old are you?” “Well, I am somewhere about eighty.” “But when was your birthday? Do you not remember your birthday?” “No, sir, I do not.” Suppose I would tell her she was not *alive* because she did not know her birthday? I would be very foolish! And if you say to yourself, “Soul, you were never born again because you do not know when the event happened,” you will be very foolish, too! If you can say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, but now I see”; be satisfied and grateful, even though you cannot tell when the great miracle was worked. Conversions, then, are not all alike.

Yet, as a usual rule, *the work of grace begins in the heart with a time of gloom*. Clouds gather—there is a general dampness round about—the soul seems saturated with doubt, fear, dread. There is something coming, but the soul knows not what. It feels that it is very sinful and deserves whatever punishment God may send. Perhaps some of you are passing through that stage of experience just now. You get sadder and yet more sad every day and yet you do not quite know why. You used to go to the theater and you enjoyed it, but you went the other night, and it seemed very dreary to you, as indeed it is. You went off to some joyful company, where you used to be very merry, but you seemed quite out of spirits—you could not join in their merriment and you were glad to get home. Something ails you! Something ails you. Yes, the clouds are gathering over your head. That is how grace usually begins to work in the soul that God means to save and bless.

After the clouds, in the next place, *the rain falls*. The real work of the Spirit of God often follows upon an inward depression of spirit. Now you really begin to repent of sin! Now are you sorry for the past. Now you begin to sigh and cry for Christ. You wish you knew Him—you wish you loved Him. Tears begin to drop or, if they do not actually fall from your eyes, yet there is inward weeping and your soul is getting moist, now, with deep contrition, hatred of sin, dread of God’s anger, the fear of the wrath to come, and a wish to lay hold on eternal life. Now the rains, the blessed rains, have come and softened your heart! If we were to water all the fields in summer, when the sun is shining with a scorching heat, it would be of very little use, indeed. An Irish friend of mine once said that he had carefully noticed that it did not rain when the sun was shining, but that, whenever it rained, there were always some clouds to keep the sunshine off. There is a great truth in what my friend said! Rain becomes doubly precious to the earth when all the surroundings are suitable for its reception. All the atmosphere becomes damp. Whereas, if rain could fall when all is dry and warm, mischief might come of it. Well, now, God’s Holy Spirit loves to come and work a congenial atmosphere in man—a holy tenderness, a devout heartbreaking—then, with the clouds, He brings a heavenly rain.

What comes after the rain? Then *the sun shines*—“clear shining after rain.” I am describing the conversion of a man to God, not in a cast-iron style, for, as I have already told you, experiences differ. But, as a rule, after the softening, saturating influences of the Holy Spirit have come to the man, then the clouds go, the rain ceases and there comes clear shining. The sun shines out. The man perceives that he is a sinner, but that Christ has come to save him. He sees his own blackness, but he believes that Christ can make him whiter than snow. He mourns his own rebellions, but he rejoices that he is made a reconciled child and admitted into the sacred family. Now look at him, his face is full of brightness. He looks as if he would like to dance, he feels so happy! His sins are washed away, he has believed in Jesus, he has rested in Christ’s finished work and now he is as merry as the birds in May. His cheerful exclamation is, “I feel like singing all the time,” for he is enjoying the clear shining after the rain! I should like to encourage any here, tonight, who are going through the rain time. Believe me, it will not last forever. You shall yet say, “Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone! The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come.” It will come all the sooner to you if you at once come to Christ. Look to Him as lifted up on the cross for you and you are now saved! God grant that you may do so at once!

Well, now, what happens after this? We have come as far as the clear shining after rain—what follows this? Why, *then everything grows!* The grass is sure to grow when we have mist and heat togeth-

er—and when a soul, having felt its need of Christ, at last beholds the light of His countenance—then it begins to grow. I love to see young converts with all the freshness of their new-born faith. They have not borrowed their language from other people. I like to see them with their zeal—they are not quite so prudent as some of us older people are. You will find that they are doing this, and doing that, and doing the other good thing, and the prudent people tell them not to do too much! My dear young friend, do not listen to them! There is many an old saint who has been spokesman for the devil when he has tried to hold a young Christian back from doing more for Christ! I had a number of kind friends when I began laboring for the Lord and especially when I began to preach—and these kind friends provided me with an unlimited quantity of blankets—and very wet blankets they were, too! They were afraid that I should get too hot in my Master’s service, so they were always ready with wet blankets to dampen my ardor. I do think that, sometimes, when Satan wants to repress the zeal of young converts, he finds more efficient servants among good people than he does among bad ones! Brothers and sisters let the young converts grow! They will not grow too fast. Let them serve God zealously! They will not do too much for Him. Let them burn with vehement zeal! There are plenty in the world who will try to cool it down. God grant that our young friends may be able to resist that chilling influence and may still be full of earnest might and spiritual strength in the service of their Savior!

That, then, is the usual method of the progress of a convert—clouds, rain, clear shining, and then growth. We pray that we may see this process perfected in very many!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to use the text in another way. This “clear shining after rain” often produces the very best condition of things **IN THE SOUL OF THE BELIEVER.**

You will see this state of things manifested in *trial followed by deliverance*. Were you ever nearer to God, my dear tried friend, than after a very heavy affliction, when God appeared for you and brought you out of it? I can only speak for myself, but I must say this—in times of prosperity I have not always felt so much the nearness of God as in moments of great sorrow and tribulation, when I have sobbed myself to sleep upon the breast of my dear Lord. And when I have awaked and have found that He has done for me what my helplessness could not do and has set me free from my foes, and made me to rejoice in His name, then have I seen Him. Then have I known Him, when He has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. See, then, dear souls, you who love the Lord, you may expect to have trials, and you may expect to have deliverances, too, for your very best state of growth comes of the two together—rain and then the clear shining after the rain—trial followed by deliverance.

Next, this experience is realized in *humiliation of self followed by joy in the Lord*. It is a very healthy thing for a man to be made to know himself. And if he is made to know himself, he will have no cause for boasting. There is not a corner in our nature in which we may sit down and say, “I have something which is good within me which I have myself worked out.” If there is anything good in us, it is the *gift* of God! The Lord often takes us down into our own natural hearts and there conducts us from chamber to chamber, that we may see our own filthiness and vileness. I suppose that nobody here knows quite how bad he is by nature. If we could fully know it, our reason might reel. We might never be able to hope, again, if we fully knew all the depravity of our hearts! Now, for a man to have plenty of rain to make him realize how evil he is, and, coupled with that, a full conviction of the greatness and blessedness of Christ and of his own interest in Christ to see sin and then to see the one great sacrifice for sin—to see our death and then to see Christ, our life—this is the very best condition for any of us to be in! I would not have you glory in Christ; I do not think you can rightly glory in Christ unless you also sorrow because of your own distance from Him and your own natural depravity. It is for our good to have this twofold experience. We might get presumptuous if we were allowed to always enjoy the clear shining! We might then think that there was no reason to watch, no further cause to carry the shield of faith, or to wield the sword of the Spirit! To preserve us from this evil, we often get taken down a notch or two. We are made to see our necessity, that we may value, all the more, the riches of God in Christ Jesus. Put those two together; deep self-humiliation, and highly prizing our precious Christ, and you have a condition of things in which a child of God can grow!

Next, I think there is another happy combination of rain and clear shining, namely, *tenderness mixed with assurance*. I like to meet with that man, whom Mr. Bunyan speaks of in his “Pilgrim’s Progress,” who was, above many, tender of sin. He was not afraid of lions, but he was dreadfully afraid of sins. He was not afraid of Vanity Fair—it had no charms for him—but he had some doubts about his interest in the celestial country. I love to see a child of God who, like Mr. Fearing, is very tender of sin. I know

some who hardly dare put one foot before the other, for fear they should do wrong. I do not like this tenderness to become *morbid*, for then it causes unnecessary grief, but yet holy tenderness is a very beautiful characteristic of a child of God when it has mingled with it the clear shining of a full assurance that enables the man to say, “I know whom I have believed; I know I am God’s child; I know that none shall pluck me from His hand.”—

*“More blessed, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven.”*

These two things, tenderness and assurance, operating together, will produce a high state of spiritual fertility. It is a dreadful thing to see the full assurance of some men! I heard of one man, in a public-house, saying, as he drank, I do not know how many glasses of beer, “I may take what I like, for I am a child of God.” O wretched blasphemer! What worse blasphemy could there be than such talk as yours? He who is a true child of God says to himself, “I do not ask how far I may go without crossing the line of safety, but I do ask that I may be kept from temptation and sin, and if there are some things that I might do, if they expose me to temptation, or expose others to it, I will have nothing to do with them.” Give me, then, a man of tender heart, who, at the same time, mixes full assurance with his tenderness! He is the man who will bring forth fruit unto holiness—and in the end—everlasting life!

Once again, our text suggests to us the blending of *experience and knowledge*. Read the Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith. By all manner of means get a clear view of the doctrines of grace, so that you can state them to others and know why you hold them firmly, yourself. But, remember, if you do not experience them in your own heart—if you do not know the power of them in your own life—you know nothing at all about them! Dry doctrine, without the dampening of the Spirit of God, may only make fuel for your eternal destruction! When a man accommodates his religion up in the attic of his head and never takes it down into the parlor of his heart, that man’s religion is in vain! We must experience the power of the gospel in our own souls if it is to be of real service to us—

*“True religion’s more than notion,
Something must be known and felt.”*

It is very nice to talk about Christ, but do you trust Him as your Savior? It may be very easy to speak about the new birth, but have you felt it? When you get these two things together, first the rain of gracious experience, and then the clear shining of intellectual knowledge of Scripture—then will you bring forth fruit unto God!

I must not linger longer over this very interesting point of the clear shining after rain as illustrated in the soul of the believer.

III. But now, in the third place, I think, dear friends, our text makes a very happy combination IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

You know that, nowadays, people will listen to anybody, provided that he is a clever preacher. I am often astonished at congregations that had a grand old man for their preacher, who always preached them good sound doctrine, and I thought their church was a very tower of orthodoxy—but when he dies, they pick somebody who preaches, no one knows what—but, then, he does it *cleverly*, and so they have him, to their eternal disgrace, and to the injury of the Church of God!

What is a good sermon? Well, I am very much of the opinion of old King George the Third, in his latter days. The old man knew the truth of God and loved it. And when he used to hear his fine court chaplains, he would often go out of the chapel and say, “It will not do—nothing to feed a soul on.” Old George had not too much brains, but all the things he did know, he clung to. Another time, as he went out of the chapel, he would say, “That will do. That will do—a soul can feed on that!” That was his way of judging a sermon—“Can a soul feed on it?” And if a soul could *not* feed on it, it did not suit George the Third! I hope that it will not suit you, either, unless it stands this test—can a soul feed on it? You may have the best china service, the silver plate and the damask tablecloth, but if, on the table, there is nothing but dry bones, I would not recommend you go there for dinner! We want something to eat both for our bodies and our souls if they are to be kept healthy.

He who would have a fruitful ministry must have clear shining after the rain, by which I mean, *first, law, and then gospel*. We must preach plainly against sin. In our ministry there must be rain—we must have the clouds and darkness, and divine justice bearing heavily upon the sinner’s conscience. Then comes in Christ crucified, full atonement, simple faith, and clear shining of comfort to the believing sinner! But there must *first* be the rain. He who preaches all sweetness and all love, and has nothing to do with warning men of the consequences of sin, may be thought to be very loving, but, in truth, he is alto-

gether unfaithful to the souls of men! I do not suppose that any of you women can sew without needles. Yet your objective is not simply to get the needle into the stuff, is it? No! You need to get in a bit of cotton, or thread, or silk. Well, now, try whether you can sew with a piece of silk alone! You cannot do it. You must put in the needle, first, must you not? And he who would do any work for God must have a sharp needle as he deals plainly with the sin of man—and he must *then* draw after it the silken thread of the gospel of Christ! There must be rain, first, and clear shining afterwards.

But, dear friends, when we come to deal with you, we have to tell you that what we want to see in you is, *first, repentance, and then zeal*—rain, and then clear shining! I am always sorry if my ministry produces men and women who, all of a sudden, seem to become Christians without any sense of sin, without any softening, without any fear of divine wrath. For I am afraid that those clear shinings *without any rain* will parch the ground, and make it dry—but never cause it to bring forth true fruit unto God. In our ministry, dear friends, it must not be so. And here I speak to my fellow-Christians as well as to myself. Your ministry may be in the Sunday school, or in street preaching, or visiting the sick, but all true ministry must have rain about it as well as sunshine.

If your service is to be successful, bringing glory to God, there must be in it, *first, prayer, and then, blessing*. You must go forth with prayer. You must go forth weeping, bearing precious seed and, afterwards, there will come the clear shining, when you return rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! God will bless and prosper your work if you go to it in the spirit of your Savior. But there must be deep anxiety in your soul and great longings and anguish before God if you expect to have the Lord’s blessing resting upon your efforts to serve Him.

I think my text also means *grace softening and then shining*. I wish that the Lord would visit all His Church with a heavy shower of rain. I mean, by way of softening the Church, making the Church loving in spirit and anxious for souls. What would happen? The Lord would soon visit it with clear shining and we would see conversions as numerous as the blades of grass which spring up in the fields! Oh, come, come, divine dew, and rest on this assembly, now, and on this church all the days of the week! Shine, O Sun of Righteousness, with glorious warmth and power, and we shall soon see a plentiful harvest, to the praise and glory of our God!

This is, I think, the meaning of the expression, “clear shining after rain,” as applied to the ministry of the Word.

IV. I have done when I have said just this much with regard to the clear shining after rain IN THE AGES TO COME.

I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet. Every now and then I see the walls of our city placarded with an intimation that something very wonderful is going to happen in such and such a year. Now, believe me, brothers and sisters, it may be, but then it may not be! Whenever I find a brother quite sure about what will happen on April the 1st, in such and such a year, I begin to wonder whether he knows anything at all about the subject! I suspect that all those who prophesy in these days, apart from the sacred Word, are as much to be respected as the Norwood gipsy and no more. And yet I am now going to turn prophet, taking my prophecy out of the Word of God.

And, first, *times of gloom are to be expected*. There has been held, in this city of London, a conference with regard to the establishment of peace. I heartily sympathize with the grand objective of that conference. Oh that wars might cease unto the ends of the earth! War is the sum of all villainies. There is nothing to be said for it. It is a monstrous thing that men should murder one another wholesale. But there will be no end of war from anything that you and I can do apart from preaching the gospel of Christ! When the King comes, when Jesus comes, when the King shall reign in righteousness, there will be an end to war—but till then there will be wars and rumors of wars. And when you hear of them, do not be disturbed as though everything was falling to pieces. There will be clear shinings after the rain! Yes, though it is a reign of blood, afterwards He shall shine out who is our peace, and who will set up an un-suffering kingdom which shall know no end. In religious matters, do not expect that the world will go on getting better and better. I think the belief that it is already much improved has a very slight foundation of fact. We have learned the art of hiding sin behind the vestments of hypocrisy, but we are not much better, after all. We have changed the fashion of sin, but the sin is still there. Now, do not expect to see the churches always sound, and religion always spreading. You may see, *somebody* will see, a falling away before the coming of Christ, and a departure from the faith. “The love of many shall wax cold.” It shall come to pass that, if you ask for faith, you will scarcely find it, for, “When the Son of Man comes,

will He find faith on the earth?” Scarcely! It will be a very rare commodity. But be not distressed even though all men are turned aside from the Christ of God, for there will be “clear shinings after the rain.”

Although times of gloom are to be expected, *an age of light will follow*. There will come a day when Christ shall gloriously reign among His ancients—when the ungodly shall hide themselves in obscure places, the meek shall have dominion in the earth—and the sons of God in that morning shall be acknowledged as the noblest of men. There is to come yet “a thousand years” (whatever that period may mean) of a reign of righteousness, wherein the whole of the earth shall be filed with the glory of God and become the vestibule of heaven. Have comfort about that glorious truth of God!

Now, dear friend, with regard to yourself, it may be that unless the Lord shall soon come to His temple, you will grow old and, as you grow old, the clouds will *return* after the rain. You will get into times of infirmity when there will be rain, and rain, and rain, and rain, and, perhaps, little sunshine. Yet expect that, before you die, you will come to the clear shining after the rain. There is a place called the land of Beulah. It lies on the verge of the Jordan, but it also lies, with that little stream before it, on the verge of the heavenly Canaan! That land is full of light and flowers, and I have heard that, if the wind blows in the right direction, you may hear the music of heaven in that land—and from a hill in that land you may see the Celestial City! I have known some old men and women who have reached the land of Beulah. It has been a great delight to me to sit and talk with them in their last days. They have had clear shinings after the rain. They have told me all about the rain, about the children dying, about the wife who was buried long ago, about the poverty they passed through, about the persecution they endured, and so on, and so on. All of that is rain. They have never been able to tell me all about the clear shining, but they have said that they felt as happy as they could be out of Heaven, and they had no particular wish about whether they should stay or whether they should go. I saw, the other day, an old man who had passed his 91st year, and though he looked like little more than a skeleton, it was grand to hear him speak of the faithfulness of God and the doctrines of the gospel! He was as clear on those points as ever he was and, perhaps, even firmer! It was a great treat to listen to him. I pray that all of us may, in due time, get to the land Beulah, where all is bright and happy—and there may we dwell till the post comes from the King to say that we must pass the stream to joyfully behold our Lord! And, oh, what clear shining after rain will there be when we once get home, when we behold His face, and when we, like Himself, have risen from the dead and stand perfect and complete in our flesh to behold our God! Oh, the glory and the bliss of being—

“Forever with the Lord,”

after the rain is over and gone! Go through it! Never be afraid of all the drenching you may get on your way to glory; get home as quickly as you can along the good old road, for, after the rain comes the clear shining. Be this the motto of each one of you from this sweet Sabbath evening hour, “Clear shining after rain.” God bless you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON PSALM 32.

A Psalm of David. You can see David all through this Psalm. Here we have David’s sin, David’s confession of sin, David’s pardon. It is a Psalm of David! Oh, that we might, each one, make it our own! It is entitled—Maschil.

This is an *instructive* Psalm. The experience of one man is instructive to another. We learn the way in which we should walk and sometimes the way in which we should *not* walk, by observing the footsteps of the flock. The Psalm begins with a blessing.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* I think I hear a sort of sigh of relief, as if the man had been burdened with a load of guilt and now, at last, his sin is put away. And his sigh has more solemn joy in it than if it had been a song—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Beloved, you must know the bitterness of sin before you can know the blessedness of forgiveness! And you must have such a sight of sin as shall break your heart before you can understand the blessedness of the divine covering, that sacred cover which hides sin effectually, blots it out, and even makes it cease to be. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Would you not think so, dear burdened heart, if it ever came to your lot? I hope that it will be so tonight. Do not we think so, who remember the day when almighty mercy forgave us our transgres-

sion and covered our sin? Indeed we do. This is one of the greatest blessings out of heaven! Perhaps, for a sort of still soft melody with much of the minor in it, this is the sweetest music in the whole Book, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Now David must put the same truth of God in another form. He loves to reduplicate, to repeat again and again a truth which is very precious to him.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Here are two reasons for the man’s blessedness—sin is not laid to his charge, and he is no longer deceitful—he no longer tries to palliate and to excuse his sin. He makes a clean breast of it and God, in a higher sense, gives him a clean breast. He acknowledges the Justice of God and God displays His infinite mercy to him. Now David tells us how he learned this sacred blessedness. What were the ways by which he went, which ended at last in this divine sweetness.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* I understand this to have been the feeling of David after his great sin—before he confessed it. He tried to excuse it to his conscience. It has been thought by some that David was, for at least nine months, in a very insensible state. But he does not appear to have been so. All the time until his sin was confessed and acknowledged, he was miserable. Because there was divine grace in his heart, sin could not dwell there with comfort. As he would not acknowledge his sin before the bar of God, pleading guilty, and waiting for judgment, as he kept silence, it preyed upon him so that he seemed to grow prematurely old, and that, not only in his skin and his flesh, but his very bones were affected—“My bones waxed old.” Those solid pillars of the house of manhood trembled and were shaken under his awful sense of sin. You cannot be a child of God and sin—and then be happy. Other men may sin cheaply, but you cannot. If you are a man after God’s own heart and you venture into uncleanness, it will sting you as does a viper—it will burn within your bones like coals of juniper.

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.” David did pray, but he did not dare to call it *prayer*. It was like the moaning and groaning of a beast that is wounded, and faint, and near to die. And this terrible pain was upon him always—“For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” God has a heavy hand for His sinful children. Other fathers may spoil their children with indulgence, but the Lord will not spoil His children. If we sin, we shall feel the weight of God’s hand. We ought to thank Him for this, for though it brings great sorrow, yet it brings great safety to us. The worst thing that can happen to a man is to be allowed to sin and yet to be happy in it. One of the best things for an erring believer is a taste of his Father’s rod.

“Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” All David’s joy was squeezed out, pressed out, by the heavy hand of God. His flowers ceased to bloom; his fruit was withered; his experience was nothing but a hard drought, without a drop of moisture.

When David had gone so far and had played only on the bass strings so long, he said, “Selah,” that is, “Tighten up the harp strings, let us put them in tune again! We are going up to something better now.”

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* Oh, how swift is the divine compassion! Quick upon the heels of confession came that word from Nathan, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” I can fancy David standing there with the hot tears in his eyes, never so broken down as when his sin was all forgiven! Before he knew that he was pardoned, he stood tremblingly fearful, brokenhearted before God. But when Nathan had said (I will repeat those gracious words), “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die,” oh, what gratitude he felt, and what tenderness, and what hatred of sin! Dear hearer, if you are burdened under a sense of sin, go and make confession to God straight away; if you feel very heavy, tonight, at the recollection of some great and grievous offense; if some scarlet spot is on your hands, and you cannot get rid of it, go and show it to God! With penitential honesty confess the sin and it shall be forgiven you.

“Selah.” Now David puts the harp strings right again. They still seem to suffer from the previous strain and so he says, “Selah” once more. “Sursum corda.” Lift up the heart! Let the whole soul go up to God.

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place.* He had talked, in

the first verse, of his sin being covered. Now he not only hides his sin beneath the divine covering, but he hides *himself* beneath the divine shelter—“You are my hiding place.” Thus does the believer sing—

*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”*

7. *You shall preserve me from trouble.* Lord, if You have taken away the greatest of all troubles, that is, guilt on the conscience. If You have really forgiven me, what trouble have I to be afraid of? “You shall preserve me from trouble.”

7. *You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* If You have pardoned me, there is the making of all manner of music in the fact of my pardon! He that is washed by the precious blood of Jesus is the man to sing! Has not God made a chorister of him? John tells us, in the Revelation, that one of the elders said to him, concerning the white-robed throng, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.”

“Selah.” David must tighten up the strings of his harp, again, for now he wishes to exult in God and to magnify His holy name, as he listens to his Lord’s gracious words.

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way, which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* Here is another blessing. The God who has forgiven the erring of the past will preserve us from erring again! God’s flowers always bloom double. He gives us Justification, but He adds sanctification. He pardons our sins, but He also makes disciples and scholars of us, and teaches us the art of holiness, which is the noblest art that man can learn! “I will instruct you and teach you in the way, which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.” When we are willing to be guided, we hardly need a word from God—a *look* is enough, just a glance of His eyes—“I will guide you with My eyes.”

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Do you need bits and bridles? If you need them, you shall have them. If you will be a horse or a mule, you shall be treated as horses and mules are! There are some Christians that need to be driven with a very sharp bit and they need to have their mouth made very tender, for now they are hard-mouthed and, sometimes, they take the bit between their teeth and try to run away instead of doing God’s bidding! Usually, the rods with which God scourges us are made of reeds grown in our own gardens. When God hides His face from His people, it is almost always behind clouds of dust which they have made themselves. You will have sorrow enough in the ordinary way to Heaven—do not make an extra rod for your own back!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* This refers to you who are outside the family of God, who do not come under His rod. You are not in His love and favor, for you have no faith in His dear Son. Do not think that you will escape punishment! If the Lord “scourges every son whom He receives,” what will He do to His enemies? “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* He always needs mercy, for he is still a sinner. He shall always have mercy—for his Savior still lives! “Mercy shall compass him about.”

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Be demonstrative! Let men see that you are happy! “Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” The Psalm is a joyful one, after all. David’s experience has taken him through a deep sense of his own sin, but it has brought him out into an elevated sense of God’s mercy! So he closes the Psalm with the jubilant exhortation, “Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” So let *us* do this night and forever! Amen.

Hymns from “Our Own Hymn Book”—686, 716, 749.

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