

THE EVERLASTING ARMS NO. 2435

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 20, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Underneath are the everlasting arms.”
Deuteronomy 33:27*

THIS short passage is found in the midst of a mass of gold—sentences containing the richest treasures of truth. All this spiritual wealth is the heritage of the people of God—not only of His typical people to whom these words were spoken, but to His real people, the true seed of Abraham, those who are the believing children of the Father of all believers. If you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may take these precious words home to yourself—and you may live upon them—you may eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and rejoice in all the refreshment that they bring to your spirit.

In the four verses, from the 26th to the 29th, notice how near God is said to be to His people. He is described as being *above us*, arching us over with His divine power, “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.” Faith can hear the tramp of the celestial cavalry above our heads. We who trust in the Lord are always safe, for the angels of God are looking down upon us from the battlements of heaven, ready to show themselves strong on our behalf as soon as their presence is needed by us.

Then, our text tells us of God *beneath us*. As He is above us in the heavens, so underneath us are the everlasting arms. The next sentence shows us God *before us*, “and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.” And the remaining verses of the chapter represent Him as being all *around us*, so that we are encompassed with God—not only with His presence, with which He fills heaven, and earth, and all deep places, but with the glorious presence of His mighty love.

He is above, beneath, before, and all around us. He never forsakes us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Let us rejoice, therefore, in our Lord's nearness.

I. Now coming to our text, I want, as God's Spirit shall help me, to bring to your notice, first, THE QUARTER THAT IS THUS HONORABLY SECURED—“Underneath.

“Underneath.” Well, in the first place, that is *the point of mysterious assault*. We look for the attacks of the powers of darkness from underneath. They are very remarkable attacks—there are many who are the objects of them, but there are few who fully understand them. There are many of God's children who are often sorely vexed by Satan, yet they do not know that it is the devil who is troubling them.

They blame themselves for thoughts that are none of their own, but which come up from the infernal pit, like smoke and sparks from that dread lower world. O friends, if Satan has ever grievously tempted and assailed you, you will dread beyond expression any repetition of that temptation or assault. Mr. Bunyan well says that a man had better go over hedge and ditch—and many miles round about—rather than meet this terrible adversary.

He not only works through the world and through the flesh, but he has modes of personal attack—fiery darts from his own hands—false accusations and foul insinuations, which come only from him. By all these he assails Christians, and brings us to a stand, so that sometimes we know not what to do. Just underneath us there seems to yawn the awful pit, out of which Satan rises, with his abandoned fallen angels, to do us mischief.

Then comes in this gracious assurance, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” Against this mysterious because incomprehensible foe, whose darts are so painful and deadly, God has been pleased to set a shield. And He puts underneath you, O child of God, His everlasting arms! You may be tempted by Satan, but it shall only be in a measure—God will not let him put forth all his diabolical strength.

When the Lord suffered Satan to tempt Job, there was always a proviso, which said to the devil as to the raging sea, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” The Lord pulled him up short just at the point where he hoped to destroy the good man—and it shall be so with you also, tried believer. Underneath you, in your worst attacks from Satan, shall be the everlasting arms of the Lord Himself.

Note a second meaning of this word “underneath.” That is *the place of our daily pilgrimage*. To the Israelites, “underneath” was the burning sand of the terrible wilderness. Sometimes “underneath” were the fiery serpents and all manner of evil things, so that their march towards Canaan was a continual trial to them.

“But” says God to His people, “though sense sees nothing underneath but ever-burning sands, let faith see underneath the everlasting arms.” Some of you go forth to your daily labors and you find the place of your service to be a real wilderness, full of trial and everything that is unpleasant to you. Yet look again, with eyes touched with heaven’s eye-salve, and instead of seeing the bitter poverty, and the grinding toil, and the daily trial, you will begin to see that God is in it all and “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

You shall go cheerfully home to heaven, upborne by God. He who made you will carry you. He who loves you will bear you all the days of old till you shall come unto the Mount of God and stand in your lot at the end of the days. I think, therefore, that our text applies not only to the point of mysterious assault, but to the place of daily pilgrimage and toil.

Do you not think that this word “underneath” also relates to *the place of perilous descent*? There are times in a man’s life when he has to come down. It is not a very easy matter to go down the hill safely. Some persons have proved that it is difficult to grow old gracefully, but to the Christian it ought not to be impossible or unusual to grow old graciously.

Still, there are difficulties about that coming down the hill of life—coming down in a very material sense, perhaps, from competence to real poverty. Coming down as to your mental powers, being conscious of losing your former influence over your fellows. Coming down in general repute, through no fault of your own, but through circumstances of which you are not the master. All this is very trying to human nature.

You know that on the way to heaven there are many Hill Difficulties—and brave spirits rather enjoy climbing to the top of them. We like a craggy path, hard and rough, where we can keep on looking upward all the way even if we have to scramble on our hands and knees. There is something pleasant in going up in that fashion, but it is when going down into the Valley of Humiliation that we are apt to slip. We do not like going down, and as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so I believe that many people trip at the end of a trial when they think it is nearly over and they have no need to look so carefully to their feet.

Well now, dear friends, if any of you are going down the hill, I think the text comes in very sweetly, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” You cannot go so low but that God’s arms of love are still. You get poorer and poorer, but “underneath are the everlasting arms.” You get older and feebler, your ears are failing, your eyes are growing dim, but “underneath are the everlasting arms.” By and by, unless the Lord speedily returns, you will have to die—and you will come down very low then—but still it will be true “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Further, I think that we may use the text as referring to *a matter of intense concern*. Sometimes, we say to one another, “Is our religion real? We trust we love the Lord, but *do* we love Him? We think we are reposing in Christ, but *are* we really doing so? We have a measure of joy and peace—does it come really through believing in Jesus, or is it a delusion of the flesh or of the devil? We have come so far in the heavenly way, but are we really going towards heaven, or is it all a mistake?”

It is a good thing, occasionally, brothers and sisters, to look underneath. He who never sees what is under him may have great cause to do so. Examine your foundations—see what your cornerstones are, for if you should be building on the sand, then, in the time of storm, your fine building will be all swept away.

It is a grand thing if we can find this text to be true, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” I dig through my experience and “underneath are the everlasting arms.” I question my joys, I examine myself about my sorrows, but do I come down on the purposes of God, the immutable faithfulness of the Most High, the eternal verities revealed in Scripture? Do I come down upon the everlasting arms?

If so, I am resting where the whole universe may rest—I am resting on a faithful God and I need not be afraid. Do not fear to examine yourself. If you do, there is perhaps all the graver need for the testing and trying. Search and look, and go to the bottom of these matters. Happy shall you be if, diving to the very depths, you can say, “Yes, underneath are the everlasting arms.”

I shall use this first word of my text in one more way. I think we have here *the secret of singular discoveries that will yet be made*. We do not at present know the reality of things—we judge according to our feelings and by the sight of our eyes—how else can we judge? But the day will come when things will appear very differently from what they do now.

There is a huge trouble which has mastered us for years—it has seemed, with its dense shadow, to darken our heavenly way for a great length of time—but the day will come when we shall look through that trouble and we shall find that “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Perhaps some of us are in sore perplexity. We cannot understand the Lord’s providential dealings with us. He does not always tell us the reason for His actions—we might not understand it if He did, but we may rest assured that He is working out purposes of infinite love. He ceases not to care for us even when things appear to be at their very worst.

I bear my willing witness to the faithfulness of God. I am not so old as some, but I am old enough to have gone through fire, and through water, and I am here to testify that I have not been burned by the one, nor drowned by the other. Cannot many of you say the same? In your sorest trials and in your hottest furnaces, has He not been especially present with you and bestowed great blessings upon you? ’Tis even so. Then trust Him, you saints, for what His Word assures you is gloriously true, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Go deeper down, look further into the real reason of things than you have been accustomed to do and you shall come on this solid foundation—that God is working out for you infinite and eternal blessedness by these light afflictions which are but for a moment.

II. Now, secondly, let us note THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS QUARTER IS SECURED, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

The everlasting arms are there, and that means, first of all, that *God Himself is close to us*, guaranteeing the eternal safety of all those who trust in Him. Of course, where anyone’s arms are, there He is, and God is not divided from His own arms. This is our joy and comfort, that God is with us. What strength it gives to faith to believe that God is present!

Even the false prophet, Mahomet, had a strong faith in god—in Allah—and when he fled for the first time and hid in a cave with only one friend, his companion said to him, “Our pursuers are after us and there are only two of us.” “Stop,” exclaimed Mahomet, “there are three, for Allah is here!” It was the utterance of a brave and grand faith—would that his whole career had been in harmony with it!

Wherever there are two of God’s people, there is *Another* with them, for God is there. We do not count Him in as we ought to do, yet, if we were wise, we would put ourselves down as only ciphers and say, “Nobody is there till HE is there. He is the one true, personal numeral that multiplies all these ciphers indefinitely.”

Mr. Wesley said, as he died, “The best of all is, God is with us.” And that is the best of all, is it not? Underneath is God Himself. He who made the heavens and the earth cannot forsake those who do not

forsake Him. If you love Him, if you trust in Him, He might as soon cease to be as fail anyone who is relying upon Him.

This is the glory of JEHOVAH that, while the gods of the heathen are worthless idols, our God hears prayer and answers the cry of His people. Try Him and see if it be not so. Blessed are they who trust in JEHOVAH, for they shall find in the living God help in every time of need, and strength sufficient for every day of trial. So, then, we see that what might appear to us as the dark abyss, the dreary, mysterious underworld, is all guarded by JEHOVAH Himself, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Our text also means that *the Lord’s immutable purpose is being fulfilled*. Where God’s arms are, He is at work, and He is at work accomplishing His purposes of grace. The text speaks of everlasting arms—that is a strength that never fails and never turns aside from the purpose to which it has bound itself.

O child of God, down deep where you cannot see it, the divine power of the Eternal Godhead is always at work for you! The arms of God are busy on your behalf. He has made them bare to show Himself strong in your defense. Be you sure of this, God has a purpose of love to all who believe in Him, and that purpose of love shall stand fast to all eternity.

Whatever changes there may be in the appearance of this world, and in the great universe of which it forms a part, there shall be no change in the infinite resolve of God to bless His people and preserve them even to the end. Wherefore, believer, be of good comfort, and say to yourself, “At the bottom of everything that happens to me, there is the immutable purpose of God, and God Himself working it out.”

Beside the Lord’s immutable purpose and His infinite power by which God is at work for you at all times, our text means that *His inexhaustible patience is waiting its time*. “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” bearing up your load, sustaining it with long endurance, while He keeps on working for you—invisible, yet ever active on your behalf.

Do you expect to see your God on this side heaven? If so, you will be disappointed. Are you willing to walk by faith and not by sight? If so, you shall have a double blessing, for, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Oh, that the Holy Spirit of God would bring you to this point! Having trusted God in the person of His dear Son, having laid the whole weight of your eternal interests upon Him whom God has revealed to be your Savior, you may leave them there in perfect safety, without a moment’s care or anxiety.

God’s everlasting arms must carry out God’s eternal purposes. Not one of His promises can fall to the ground, for “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” It is God Himself who undertakes to bear you up, and bear you through—therefore, rest you assured that He will do it.

III. I must not speak longer upon that matter, for I must say just a little upon the third point. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THIS TEXT IS VERY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

One of these times is, I think, *when we are very sick and very feeble*. The pillows have been beaten up for you and made as soft as they can be. And the bed, which is so apt to grow hard, has been tenderly smoothed by kind fingers, yet you sink back as if you were about to die of exhaustion. Sink back, then. Be not afraid, for “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Perhaps there comes a faintness over you and you seem to be sinking, sinking—you know not where—still, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” You try to rise, but you cannot. You would clutch at something by which you think you might get back to activity, but you fall back into the same state of weary languor and pain. Well, but still, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

It is delightful to feel that our feebleness impinges upon Omnipotence—that just when there is nothing left to us—then God comes in with all His fullness and bears us up. He is ever faithful and full of compassion—He does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men—so, when He must grieve them, it is then that He displays His special power to strengthen and sustain them.

Go home to your bed, if so it must be with you. If there are wearisome months of sickness and disease awaiting you, go home, and carry this text with you, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Is not this word very sweet, too, *when burdened with sore troubles or oppressed with heavy labors*? You feel that you need double strength and you say, “I cannot keep on any longer. There is too much for mortal powers to endure, I cannot bear up under these repeated trials. The last time I felt thus, I thought that I had no strength left, and now this feeling comes over me again—what shall I do? I am thrown down, I am crushed, as though men were riding over my head. I seem to be cast out like the mire in the streets.” Yes, but still, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

We sang, just now—

“As thy day, thy strength shall be.”

Is that truth or fiction? Ask God’s people as to their past experience and they will set their seal that God is true. And you, too, shall find it true.

Oh, how wondrously God’s saints have been borne up under persecution, and cheerful and glad under oppression! The sweetest songs that ever were heard on earth were sung behind prison bars. Peradventure I shall not be wrong when I say that the most wonderful joys that ever were felt by mortal hearts have been felt by men who, on the morrow, were to be burned at the stake—but whose very souls have danced within them, because of the unspeakable delight which the presence of God has given to them.

I think it was Socrates who said that “Philosophers could be merry without music.” I take the statement from his mouth, and alter it, and say, Christians can be happy without happy circumstances. They can sometimes, like nightingales, sing best in dark nights. Their joy is not mere outward mirth. Sorrows fall upon them, yet, from the deep that lies underneath, wells up yet more exceeding joy. Yes, “underneath are the everlasting arms,” and when we can no longer stand, it is a blessed thing to lean or fall back on them.

I have already told you that another time when this text is very sweet is *when you are going down hill*. And some of you may be going down hill pretty fast just now. Never mind, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” When you come down the hill of old age, you know what lies at the bottom. Why, then, you go up again, higher than ever you went before, renewing your youth, and being forever with the Well-beloved.

So, dear friends, I may change the application of my text, “Underneath are the everlasting arms,” and pass it on to *those who are all trembling and shaking*. Some of you, perhaps, know what I mean. That young man has begun to preach a little, but he says, “I fear that I shall break down.” Dear brother, if you get a message from God to tell, then tell it, and do not be afraid, for “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

You are seeking to gather a few young people together and you are trying to bless them, but you feel your own weakness so much that you say, “I know I shall make a failure of it.” Do not say so, for “underneath are the everlasting arms.” He who helps us when we go down, down, down, is equally ready to do so when we are going up in His service. When our ardent zeal is bearing us forward to do something more for the Lord than we are quite equal to, then, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

And if you are seeking greater holiness, daring to indulge a loftier joy—if you are trying to sing some of those hymns which, a few months ago, you thought were pitched in too high a key for you—be bold and daring. Your wing feathers will grow by your very attempt to fly. The possibilities of grace are boundless—leave yourself to them. Be not always weak and trembling. God help you to become as a David, and you who are as David to become as an angel of the Lord!

Once more, the hour will come *when everything will begin to melt away beneath your feet*. Earthly comforts will fail you, friends will be unable to help you—they can wipe the clammy sweat from your

brow and moisten your lips with a drop of water—but they cannot go with you on the great voyage upon which you are about to be launched.

When heart and flesh fail, then may the Lord speak to you the sweet words before us, “Underneath are the everlasting arms”! It will be a sinking to the flesh, but a rising to the spirit. Underneath dying saints there is the living God. Be not afraid, therefore, even to die, for to the Christian, “to die is gain.”

I recollect, at a funeral, when we laid the body of one of God’s saints in the grave, a dear minister prayed, “Lord, we thank Thee that though our dear friend has come so low as to be in his grave, he cannot go any lower, for ‘underneath are the everlasting arms,’ and in due time Thou wilt bring him up again in those everlasting arms, raised in the likeness of his Lord.”

That is true of all believers. Therefore let this text come sweetly home to your heart, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”

I must conclude with just this remark. There are some here who are not yet saved. I would illustrate the way of salvation to you by this text. You are hoping to save yourself, you are depending upon something that you have done, or that you have felt. I want you to let all that go, to give up every hope you have that comes out of yourself.

“Oh!” say you, “but I shall fall.” Yes, you will, and that falling shall be your salvation, for, “underneath are the everlasting arms.” There you are, up at that window, and the flames are raging behind you, so that you cannot escape—but one stands below, He is strong enough to catch you in His arms and he says, “Drop into my arms. Do not hesitate.” Jesus Christ never yet allowed any soul to be injured that dropped into His arms. Let go, man, let go! Let go everything and drop into the arms of Jesus.

That is the saving thing—to let everything else go and trust alone to Jesus, depending wholly upon Him who lived, and died, and rose again, and is the ever-living Savior of sinners. Drop into His arms. They are everlasting arms, as strong to save now as they were eighteen hundred years ago. Drop into His arms. God help you to do so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DEUTERONOMY 8

1. *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.*

Every word here seems emphatic. Like the children of Israel, we are to observe all the commandments of the Lord our God, not merely some of them, picking and choosing as we please. It is a very ill conscience, which regards some of God’s statutes, and pays no attention to the others. In fact, the very act of making a selection as to what commands we will observe is gross disobedience. “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do.”

Notice that we are not only to do as we are bidden, but to do it with carefulness, “Ye shall observe to do.” God would not have a thoughtless, careless, blind service, but we must bow our mind and heart as well as our will to His service. Remember also that it is not sufficient to “observe” the commandments so as to note what they are, but we are to “observe to do” them. That observation which does not end in right practice is like a promising blossom upon a tree, which never knits, and which therefore produces no fruit.

Further notice that, to walk in the ways of God, is for our own benefit as well as for His glory, “That ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.” There are, doubtless, many good things, which we miss because we are not careful in our walking. I am sure that the happiest life will be found to be that which is most carefully conducted upon the principles of holy obedience to God’s commands.

There are certain blessings which God will not give to us while we are disobedient to Him. Many a father feels that he cannot indulge his child as he would wish to indulge him when he finds the child negligent as to his father's will. So, if we please God, God will please us, but if we walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to us.

Let me read this most instructive verse again, that it may be further impressed upon your memories and your hearts, "All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers." To help you in obeying these commands, it is added,—

2. *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*

Look back, and derive from your past experience a motive for more careful obedience in the future. He does not read his own life aright who does not see in it abundant causes for gratitude, and how can gratitude express itself better than by a cheerful, hearty obedience in the present and the future?

3. *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna,*

These two sentences come very closely together, "Suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna." I suppose we are not fit to eat heavenly bread till first of all we begin to hunger for it. God loves to give to men who will eat with an appetite, "He suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna."

3. *Which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;*

It was a new kind of food, and even in the day when they ate it, they did not fully know what it was. They saw that it came by a miracle, and it remained a mystery. And I think we can say that, though we have fed upon the Bread of heaven, some of us, for well-nigh forty years, yet we hardly know, nor dare to think that we know, what it is made of, nor can we tell all the sweetness that is in it. We know the love of Christ, but it still passes our knowledge.

It is true of us, as of Israel in the wilderness, "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know."

3. *That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*

It is a grand thing to be delivered from materialism, to be freed from the notion that the outward means are absolutely essential for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. If God had so willed it, we could have lived on air, if the air had been sanctified by the Word of God and prayer for such a use. The Lord has, however, chosen to feed us upon bread.

Yet our highest life, our real life, does not live on bread, but it lives on the Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. This is one of the passages with which our Lord fought Satan in the desert and overcame him. Happy is that servant of God who will arm himself with this same truth, and feel, "I am not to be provided for merely by money, or by anything else that is visible. God will provide for me somehow, and I can leave all care about the means if the means fail, and get away to the God of the means, and lean, not on what I see, but on that arm which is invisible."

That which you can see may fail you, for it is, like yourself, a shadow, but He whom you cannot see will never fail you. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack, but the arm eternal never fails and never is shortened. Lean on that arm, and you shall never be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. It takes forty years to teach some people that lesson, and some, alas! have not learned it even at the end of eighty years.

4. *Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.*

See how God not only cares for His people's food, but for their raiment also. We may, therefore, well take heed to Paul's injunction, "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." Whether it was by a miracle that the Israelites' raiment did not wear out, or whether it came to pass, in the order of providence, that they were able to get fresh clothing when it did wear out, does not signify at all. It made

no difference to them how it was arranged, for it was equal kindness on the part of God who provided for them.

“Neither did thy foot swell.” We call the Arab, sometimes, “The pilgrim of the weary foot,” but the Israelites’ feet were not weary. They traversed a stony, wilderness, yet God kept them in such health and strength that their feet swelled not even after forty years of journeying. You and I often get worn out in forty hours—forty days are as long as we can hope to go—but God enabled His ancient people to go on for forty years, and still their feet swelled not. Dr. Watts sweetly sang,—

*“Mere mortal power shall fade and die,
And youthful vigor cease;
But we that wait upon the Lord
Shall feel our strength increase.*

*“The saints shall mount on eagles’ wings,
And taste the promised bliss,
Till their unwearied feet arrive
Where perfect pleasure is.”*

5. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.

We sometimes think that we could do without the Lord’s chastening. If He will give us food and raiment, and keep our foot from swelling, we will not crave the rod. No; but though we do not ask for it, the rod is one of the choicest blessings of the covenant. And if we are the Lord’s children, we shall not go without it.

To come under divine discipline is one of the greatest mercies we can ever have. Many of us, who are now men and women, thank God for earthly parents who have corrected us. We wonder what we should have been if there had been no discipline in our father’s house. So, truly, is it with all of us who are God’s children. In years to come, we shall prize the chastisement which now makes us grieve. Even now, it is well if, by faith, we can apply to our own heart this text, “As a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.”

6-7. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

There are changes in our condition. Israel was not always in the wilderness. The chosen people were brought into a good land, into a place of rest from their weary wanderings. So it may happen to you and to me that, even in temporal circumstances, God may work a great change for us, and especially will He do this in spiritual matters.

After a time of wilderness traveling, we who have believed do enter into rest. We come to understand the Gospel, and he who understands the Gospel is not any longer in the wilderness. In a certain sense, he has come into the land of promise, where he already enjoys covenant mercies. It is true that the Canaanite is still even in that land, and we have to drive him out, but it is a good land to which God has brought us, “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.” The Lord makes us drink of the river of His good pleasure, He satisfies us with the cooling streams of His covenant love.

8. A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

I will not go into a spiritualizing of all this, but I know that you, who have come to believe in Christ, and have entered by faith into His rest, know what sweet things God has provided for you—not merely bare necessities, but choice delights. He gives you to eat of the sweetnesses, He gives you the fatnesses—the wines on the lees, well-refined, and the fat things full of marrow.

I trust that there are many here who know the blessed experience of joy and peace in believing. You have entered into a fair region, you have passed through the belt of storms, you have come where the trade winds blow heavenward, your sails are filled, your vessel skips along before the breeze, you are making good way towards the Fair Havens of eternal felicity.

9. *A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.*

There are deep things hidden away in the Gospel treasures. Silver and gold there may be none, but then, iron and copper are much more useful things, and the most useful things we shall ever want in this life lie hidden beneath the surface of the Gospel. If we know how to dig deep, we shall be abundantly rewarded by the treasures, which we shall discover.

Well now, if your experience has thus changed, if you have left the fiery serpents and the howling wilderness behind you, and have come into a place of peace and enjoyment, what follows?

10. *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.*

He permits you to eat, not to satiety, but you may eat and be full—only not so full but that you can always bless His name. Do not be afraid of holy joy. Eat and be full of it, only let it never take off your heart from Him who gives you the joy. On the contrary, bless your God for the good land, which He has given you.

It is said that, in the olden time, pious Jews always blessed God before they ate, and always blessed God after they ate. They blessed God for the fragrance of the flower when ever they smelt it. Whenever they drank a cup of water, they blessed the Lord who gave them drink out of the rock in the desert. Oh, that we were always full of praises of God! Then it would not hurt us to be full of meat, but if we get full of meat, and are empty of praises, this is mischievous indeed.

11. *Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:*

That would be practical atheism—not keeping the commandments of God is one of the most vivid ways of forgetting Him.

12-14. *Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;*

The other day, a friend asked me this question, “Whence does God get his princes?” and the answer I gave was, “He often picks them off dunghills.” Oh, but they sometimes forget the dunghills where they grew, and think themselves wonderfully important individuals! Then there is a time of pulling down for them. We cannot eat and be full without having the temptation of getting our heart lifted up.

It is a great blessing to have the heart lifted up in one way, that is, in God’s ways, but to be lifted up by bread, to be lifted up by silver, to be lifted up by flocks and herds, is such a bad way of being lifted up that evil and sorrow must come of it. See, the Lord does not forbid his people to build a house, or to eat and to enjoy what he gives them, but He does charge them not to forget the God who gave them these mercies, nor to forget where they used to be in slavery, “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

15. *Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;*

I cannot but pause as I recollect my own passage through “that great and terrible wilderness, where there was no water.” When a soul is under conviction of sin, “fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought” are very feeble images of the pains and miseries that come of guilt unforgiven. “Where there was no water.” Oh! what would we not have given then to have understood a little of that Gospel which, perhaps, we now despise? Oh! what would we not have given then just to have moistened our burning lips with the living water of the precious Word in which, possibly, now we see no refreshing?

May God have mercy upon us for our forgetfulness of his great mercy! Let us, with deep gratitude, think of Him again, “Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint.”

“More likely,” says one, “to bring fire rather than water out of a rock of flint,” and it did seem as if the cross of the curse must have cursed us, yet it blessed us. The Lord brought forth living water out of that Rock which was smitten for guilty man.

16-17. *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.*

We must not say this either about temporal or spiritual wealth. If we have grown in grace, and have become useful, and are spiritually a blessing to others, we must not take any credit for it to ourselves, or else down we shall go before long. God did not enrich you that you might set up for a god in opposition to Him. Christ did not love you that you might make yourself a rival to Him. Oh, that must not be! We must never say in our heart, “My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

18-19. *But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.*

If you live like sinners, you will die like sinners. “Where, then, is the perseverance of the saints?” asks one. Why, in this, that they shall not live like sinners! God’s grace will not let them go wandering after idols, to worship and to serve them. He will keep us faithful to Himself, but if we will wander after idol gods, it proves that we are not the Lord’s true Israel, and we must expect to be served as others have been who have turned aside to worship idols,

20. *As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—397, 547, 738

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