

“ALL HAIL!”**NO. 2628**

**A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.

And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Then said Jesus to them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

Matthew 28:9-10

ON Sabbath mornings, lately, we have been meditating upon the sorrows of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been, in thought, traveling with Him from dark Gethsemane to still darker Golgotha. We have pictured Him under accusation before Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. We have, in imagination, heard the cruel shouts of the Jews, “Away with him! Crucify him!” These solemn events have been full of pain to us—even the bliss that comes to us through the cross of Christ has been toned down with intense sorrowfulness as we have thought of the agonies our Savior endured there.

But as soon as we get to the other side of the cross and realize that Christ has risen from the dead, everything is calm, and quiet, and peaceful. There are none of those rough winds and stormy blasts that come sweeping around us as we stand outside Pilate’s palace and Herod’s judgment hall. All is spring-like—summer-like, if you will—yes, and autumn-like, for there are most luscious fruits to be gathered in the garden wherein was a new sepulcher out of which the living Christ arose in all the glory of His resurrection from the dead.

There was just one painful memory during the interview which Christ had with His disciples, when he said to Peter the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” And “Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?” But all the rest of the manifestations of our Lord to His disciples were singularly placid, joyful, restful.

So, dear friends, I want it to be with you now as you enter into the spirit of the scene described in our text. I pray that the Master may set you on the other side of the sepulcher and make you feel as if He breathed upon you as He breathed upon His disciples, and said to you as He said to them, “Peace be unto you!” We need this experience, at least sometimes, for while the lessons to be learned at Calvary are inestimably precious and it is beyond all things necessary to sorrow over our sin as we see how we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, yet we must ardently desire to gather all the fruit that grows even on the accursed tree, and part of that fruit will give us the sweet rest of reconciliation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the time for fellowship with your Lord, beloved. You cannot tread the winepress with Him. You cannot pour out your blood to mingle with His, for the atonement is complete and needs no suffering on your part—anything added to it would spoil it. But now, on the other side of the tomb, you can stand beside your risen Savior. He can come into our midst and say, as He has often done, “Peace be unto you!”

As we journey to our homes after this service, we can walk and talk with Him as they did who went to Emmaus in company with Him. We can take Him with us into our daily labors, on the morrow, even as He went to the sea where His disciples were fishing and taught them how to catch a multitude of fish. Familiar acquaintance with Christ should spring out of the fact that He is no longer dead, that He is not now in the grave, but that He has risen in fullness of life and that, most wonderful truth of all, that life is in all His people.

I. Our meditation upon this text will, I trust, help us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. Read the beginning of it and learn from it this first lesson. THE LORD JESUS OFTEN MEETS WITH HIS PEOPLE IN THE WAY OF HOLY SERVICE. “As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them.”

My brother said, just now in prayer, that we do not expect to actually meet Jesus in flesh and blood, but we know that there is a great blessedness in store for those who have not seen Him with their mortal eyes, and yet have believed in Him. And we do expect to meet Him, after a spiritual fashion, so that faith can recognize Him. Nay, more, we know that He is here in His real though invisible presence. We may expect this blessed experience when we are in the way of holy service. I grant you that our Lord Jesus comes to us at other times as well.

*“Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings—
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings.”*

Ay, and sometimes the light of the Sun of righteousness surprises the Christian when he cannot sing. “Or ever I was aware,” says the sweet singer of the blessed Canticle—“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib,” for the presence of Christ may be suddenly manifested to His people and they may be as though they were caught away altogether from earthly scenes, and were with Christ in the heavenly places.

We have known this to happen, sometimes, in the lonely night watches. And we have said with David, “When I awake, I am still with thee,” even in the darkness of the night. We have known it to happen in the very midst of the hurry and worry of business. All of a sudden everything has been calm and quiet. We could not make it out—it seemed like a Sabbath in the middle of the week—a very oasis in the wilderness.

The Lord Jesus Christ has come to some of us when we have been amidst the busy throng in Cheapside. In fact, there is nothing but sin that can keep Him away from us, since He is not dependent upon the ordinary rules that regulate the movement of earthly bodies. He was not so on earth after He had risen from the dead, for though I doubt not that He often came and went just as others did, yet, at other times, He came like an apparition, “the doors being shut,” and He could be here and there at His own sweet will, passing from place to place, holding the eyes of those to whom He was nearest, or opening their eyes just when He pleased to do so.

And that is how He acts toward us now. Do not some of you remember when Christ first appeared to you? Ah! it is years ago with some of us, but we mind the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first manifested Himself to us. The joy of marriage—the joy of harvest—these were as nothing compared with the joy that came to us from the vision of His face. Many days have passed since then and we have had fresh visitations from Him. He has come to us, and come again, and yet again. He has not been strange to us and now, some of us can say that we are not strangers to Him, for He is our dear familiar Friend. Yet are there times, even with those who dwell with Him, when the light is clearer, and the voice is nearer, and the sense of His presence is more delightful than usual.

These times, I say, come by Christ’s own appointment whenever He pleases, yet I again remind you of the lesson we learn from our text, which is, that we may expect these visits from Christ when we are going about His business. These devoted women had been to the sepulcher and had there seen “the angel of the Lord,” who had bidden them go quickly, and tell His disciples that He was risen from the dead, and would meet them in Galilee. So they hastened with all their might to tell the cheering tidings to the sorrowing followers of Jesus, “and as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them.”

It is better to be actively working for Christ than to sit still, and read, and study, and hope to enjoy His company. There must be alternations between the contemplative and the active life of a Christian. Sometimes, it is best to sit quietly with Mary and leave Martha and the dishes alone. But at another time,

it is better to bestir yourself and to run hither and thither with all the diligence of a Martha, for then Jesus will be most likely to meet with you.

I notice—and I think that my observation is correct—that my brethren and sisters who do most for Christ, know most about Him, and have most fellowship with Him. The Sunday school teacher, diligent in his class and weary, perhaps, now that the Sabbath is well-nigh spent, yet rejoicing that he has set forth Christ before his class, is the one to whom the Lord will come and manifest Himself. The man who has been in the street preaching, or going from door to door trying to speak for Christ by a tract or by his own voice, and all of you, indeed, who have done anything for your Lord and Master, are the most likely persons for Him to meet with at this time.

I have known some who have been for years members of churches, but who have never done anything for the Savior. They are the kind of people who do not get on with my ministry long—they say that they are not able to feed upon it. They are generally wanderers who go about from one place to another looking for new light, and they never get to be very happy or very useful. Nor do they often have much communion with Christ. No, our Lord is very choice in His company and He does not frequent the house of the sluggard.

But wherever there is one who spends and is spent for Jesus, there we may expect that Jesus will be. If we heartily serve Him, the state of mind into which we shall be brought will be congenial to His own—fellowship will be likely between the laboring Savior and His laboring servant. Follow the example of Him who went about doing good and you will thus be in sympathy with Him, and you will find that He will come and walk with you because you two are agreed.

That is certainly one reason why Christ comes to those who are busy about His errands, because He is in agreement with them and they are therefore traveling on the right road to meet with Him. “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat,” is a rule that Christ observes. And those who will not work for Him get but scant morsels from Him. Few of the bits my brother spoke of, that are dipped in the dish with Christ, come to those who never lift a hand to do Him any service.

But if He brings us into loving obedience, into joyful alacrity and sacred earnestness in doing His will, then it is that He will in all probability meet with us by the way and manifest Himself to us. Sit you down, then, you who have come to the end of another day of holy service, and pray, “Jesus, Master, come and meet us now.” Oh, that you might feel as though He stood behind you and looked over your shoulder—as if the shadow of the Christ fell upon you and you felt even now His pierced hand touching you—and that prostrate at His feet your spirit might lie, holding Him by the feet and worshipping Him!

I do not feel as if I need to preach upon this subject. I want only to set you longing for larger and deeper communion with Christ and aspiring after it, especially you to whom this Sabbath has been a day of service, from which service, perhaps, you have not as yet seen any good come. You have come from the field weary—not weary of it, though weary in it—for you are still ready to serve your Lord. Now I want you to feel that Christ is here and that He comes to commune with you.

II. So we advance a step to our second remark. WHEN JESUS MEETS US, HE ALWAYS HAS A GOOD WORD FOR US. “Jesus met them, saying, All hail.”

That is, first, *a word of salutation*, as if He had said, “Welcome, friends! Glad to see you, friends! All hail, My friends!” There is nothing cold and formal about that word—it seems full of the warmth of brotherly kindness and affectionate condescension. “All hail!” says our Lord to the women. “You are glad to see Me, and I am glad to see you. ‘All hail!’” How much more sweet that sounds than that bitter sarcasm of the soldiers, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And yet it seems almost like an echo of it, as though Christ caught up the cruel word, crushed the bitterness out of it, and then gave it back to the holy women before Him full of delicious sweetness. “All hail!” says He. “All hail!”

My dear Christian brother or sister, would you be glad to see the Savior if He could now be made visible to you? Yet you would not be so glad to see Him as He would be to see you. He is very dear to you, but He is not so dear to you as you are to Him. Out of two friends, the greater affection is always found in the one who has conferred the most favors upon the other. I will not dare to compare for a moment the love which exists between you and Christ, for what have you ever done for Him compared

with what He has done for you? He loves you more than you can ever love Him. Well, then, He says, “All hail! I am glad, My son—I am glad, My brother—I am glad, my friend, that you have come up to this place where My people meet. All hail! I welcome you.”

Besides being a word of salutation, it is *a word of benediction*. Our Lord, by this expression, seems to say, “All health be to you—everything that can do you good! I wish for you every good thing.” He speaks it to you, believer. “May you have the haleness, the wholeness that makes holiness, and so may it be all well with you—all hale with you!”

Then it is also *a word of congratulation*, for some render it, “Rejoice,” and indeed, that is the meaning of the term—“Let us joy and rejoice together.” Jesus gives to you, beloved, this watchword as He meets you—“Rejoice.” The children in your class are not yet all converted, nevertheless, rejoice in Christ. All in the congregation, about whom some of us are concerned, are not saved, nevertheless, let us rejoice in Christ. You, yourself, cannot run as quickly on your Lord’s errands as you wish you could, nevertheless, rejoice in Christ Jesus, though you can have no confidence in the flesh. It is a blessed thing when it becomes a sacred duty to be glad. What man to whom our Lord Jesus Christ says, “Rejoice,” can have an excuse for misery? So, “All hail!” is a word of gratulation.

And according to some versions, it may be read, “Peace be unto you!” That is *a word of pacification*—as though our Lord had said, “Ah! you women did not run away from Me, as the men did. But still, you were afraid and very timid, and though you were at the sepulcher, you went there trembling. You did not believe My Word, or you scarcely believed it—that I would rise from the dead, but I am not going to have any back reckonings with you. ‘Peace be to you!’”

Now, dear friends, have you heard your Lord and Savior say to you, “It is all forgiven—every omission and every commission, every slip and every fault—all the lukewarmness and all the coldness—it is all gone”? That is the meaning of the greeting, “All hail!” from the lips of Christ. “There is nothing between me and you, dear heart, but perfect peace and unbroken love. I rejoice to see you and I would have you rejoice, and rest, and be quiet, for I have come near unto you, to bless and cheer you.”

That is the second lesson I learn from the text. First, that, when we are running on our Master’s errands, we may hope that He will meet us. And next, when He does meet us, we may expect that He will always have a good word for us.

III. Thirdly, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, IT BEHOOVES US TO GET AS NEAR TO HIM AS WE CAN. “And they came and held him by the feet.”

Note that they first stood still. They had been running quickly to carry the angel’s message to the disciples, but at the sound of their Lord’s voice they stopped, half out of breath, and they seemed to say by their looks, “It is indeed our blessed Master. It is the very same Lord whom we saw laid in the tomb, the Best-beloved of our soul.”

Then, next, they approached Him. They did not flee away backward at all, but they came right up to Him, “and held him by the feet.” Now, dear friends, if Jesus is near you, come still closer to Him. If you feel that He is passing by, come near to Him by an act of your will. Be all alive and wide-awake—do not be half asleep in your pew, but say, “If He is here, I will get to Him. If He is anywhere about, I will speak with Him and beg Him to speak to me.” If ever our heart was active, it ought to be active in the presence of Christ. And let us try to be all aglow with joy, for so were these women. They were delighted to behold their risen Lord, so they drew nearer to Him and all intent with earnest, burning, all-conquering love, they came so close to Him that they could grasp Him, for they felt that they must adore Him.

Now, beloved, let it be so with you and with me. Do not let us lose a single word that our Lord is ready to speak to us. If this is the time of His appearing to us, let Him not come and find us asleep. If He be knocking at the door, if He be saying to us, “Open to me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled,” let us not reply that we cannot leave the bed of sloth to let Him in—but now, if ever in our lives, let us breathe a mighty prayer, “Come, O You blessed One whose voice I know full well, and commune with me.” If Jacob held the angel whom he did not know—if, as our hymn puts it, he said,

*“Come, O Thou Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee”—*

let us much more say,

*“Come, O Thou Traveler well-known,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,*

“I must have your company. My spirit craves it, sighs for it, pines for it. I must have You. I will hold You. Leave me not, but reveal Yourself to me now.”

That is the third lesson we may learn from our text.

IV. And the fourth I have almost touched upon. I could not help it. It is this, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, WE SHOULD RETAIN HIM AND WORSHIP HIM. “They came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.”

When Mary Magdalene first sought to hold her Lord, Jesus said to her, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” But now He permits what He had formerly forbidden—“They came and held him by the feet”—those blessed feet that the nails had held but three days before. He had risen from the grave and therefore a wondrous change had taken place in Him—but the wounds were there, still visible, and these women “held him by the feet.”

And beloved, whenever you get your Lord Jesus near to you, do not let Him go for any little trifle—nay, nor even for a great thing, but say, with the spouse in the Canticles, “I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.”

The saints themselves will sometimes drive Christ away from those who love Him. Therefore the spouse said, “I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.” Be jealous lest you lose Him, when you have realized the joy, the rich delight, of having Him in your soul! You feel, at such a time as that, as if you scarcely dared to breathe—and you are so particular about your conduct that you would not venture to put one foot before the other without consulting Him, lest even inadvertently you should cause Him grief. Bow thus at His feet. Be humble. Hold Him by the feet. Be bold, be affectionate. Grasp Him, for though He is your God, He is also your Brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh.

But take care that in it all, you worship Him—“They came and held him by the feet, *and worshipped him.*” This is not the Socinians’ christ—they cannot worship their savior, for he is but a mere man. This is our Christ, “the Son of the Highest,” “very God of very God,” “God over all, blessed forever.” As we hold Him by the feet, we feel a holy awe stealing over us, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground when He is there.

We hold Him, but still we reverently bow before Him and feel like John in Patmos when He wrote, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.” Well spoke one of old, to whom it was said, “You cannot see Christ and live.” “Then,” replied the saint, “let me see Him and die.” And we would say the same, for, whatever happens to us, we wish for a sight of Him.

I have read of one who cried, under the overpowering weight of divine manifestations, “Hold, Lord! Hold! I am but an earthen vessel and if You do fill me fuller, I will perish.” Had I been in his place, I think I would not have spoken quite as he did, but I would have said, “Go on, Lord, with the blessed manifestation of Yourself. Let the earthen vessel be broken if need be—it cannot possibly come to a better end than by being crushed and even annihilated by the majesty of Your glorious presence.” At any rate, we will hold Him and worship Him—may the Lord help us to do so more and more!

V. The last remark I have to make is a practical one. It also comes out of our text. FROM SUCH A MEETING WITH CHRIST, WE SHOULD GO ON A FURTHER ERRAND FOR HIM. “Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren to go into Galilee; and there shall they see me.”

When we have such a meeting with Christ as these women had, let us go on some further errand for Him as soon as He permits us to do so. It is a very blessed thing to have fellowship with Christ, but it

would be a very ill result of our communion with Him if it led any one of us to say, "Now I shall not go back to my service any more. I shall not go to my class again. I might be provoked by the scholars. I might be careless and so I might lose the fellowship I am now enjoying with Jesus. I shall not go and preach again. I shall stay at home and have communion with Christ all day."

I knew one brother who got into such a condition that he really thought that to see the face of his people on the Lord's Day robbed Him of fellowship with Christ. All week long, he never saw anybody, for his fellowship with Christ, he said, was so intense that he could not bear to look upon mankind. And when the Sabbath came and he had to meet with his people, he would, if he could, have preached out of a box so that they might hear his voice, but he might never see them.

Now, I do not think that such a spirit as that is at all right. Who is the man who can best bear witness for Christ, but the man who has been with Him in secret and sacred fellowship? And what is a better return for Christ's wondrous grace to us than that we should consecrate ourselves to the holy task of showing forth His glory amongst our fellow men?

There is a striking legend illustrating the blessedness of performing our duty at whatever cost to our own inclination. A monk had seen a beautiful vision of our Savior and in silent bliss, he was gazing upon it. The hour arrived at which it was his duty to feed the poor at the convent gate. He would gladly have lingered in his cell to enjoy the vision, but under a sense of duty he tore himself away from it to perform his humble service. When he returned, he found the blessed vision still waiting for him, and heard a voice saying, "Had you stayed, I would have gone. As you have gone, I have remained."

So, dear friend, ask yourself, "Since Jesus is very precious to me, what more can I do for Him? I was running to His disciples when He met me, so when He bids me go to them, I will run the faster that no time may be lost to the disciples before they also share the enjoyment with which my Master has indulged me. And when I get to them, I shall have more to tell them than I had before. I was going to tell them that I had seen the angel of the Lord, but I shall be able to tell them that I have seen the Lord Himself, and I shall tell the message so much more brightly and powerfully now that I have had it confirmed from His own lips."

Those holy women were full of fear and joy, strangely mingled emotions, before—but now, surely fear must have taken flight, for Jesus had said to them, "Be not afraid." And it must have been joy, and joy alone, with which these blessed women would break in upon the eleven and say, "We have seen what is far better than a vision of angels, for we have seen the Master Himself. We held Him by the feet till we knew that it was really our Lord. We held Him till we had worshipped Him and heard Him say, 'Be not afraid.' And then He gave us a message from His own dear lips, and this is what He said to us, 'Tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.'"

Happy preacher who, on his way to his pulpit, is interrupted by meeting his Master. Happy preacher, who has lost the thread of his discourse, for few discourses are worth much that have too much thread in them, but who has found something infinitely better than thread—some links of sacred fire—some chains of heavenly love that go from end to end of the discourse, so that he tells what he knows, and testifies what he has seen, for men must give heed to such a witness. His countenance is all aglow with the light that shines from the face of Jesus. It is bright with the joy that fills the preacher's own soul.

And those who listen to him say, "Would God we knew that joy!" And those that do share it say, "Yes, we know it," and they respond to it till hearts leap up to speak with hearts, and they sing together a chorus of praise unto Him whom they unitedly love.

I wish it were so at this moment. I would like, dear friends, to be able to tell my message better because of having met my Master. And I should like you to go out to the work and service of another week strengthened and rendered mighty and wise for all you have to do, because Jesus has met you and has said to you, "All hail," and you have held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.

There I leave the subject with you. Perhaps some of you are saying, "We wish we could hold Him by the feet." Ay, but in this blessed supper, which is spread upon the table, you have an outward emblem of how to hold Him better than by the feet, for, in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine in memory of Him, He sets forth to us how His whole self can be spiritually received into the innermost

chambers of our being—how He can come unto us and sup with us, and we with Him—how He can dwell in us and we can dwell in Him. Not only the peace of God, but His very self can now come and abide in your very self, and there can be a union between you and Him that never shall be broken. God grant that you may enjoy it even now!

But I know that some here present cannot understand what I have been talking about. It must have seemed like an idle tale to them. Ah, dear friends! and if we were to go into a stable and were to talk to horses about the ordinary concerns of our home life, what would they know about it all? They understand about oats, and beans, and hay, and straw—but what can they know of the themes that interest intelligent human beings? So, there are some men in this world, of whom Dr. Watts truly says,

“Like brutes they live, like brutes they die.”

They have no spiritual nature, even as the horse has no immortal soul, and they cannot therefore comprehend spiritual things. And as I might pity the horse because it is a stranger to mental enjoyments, so I would pity the unregenerate man who is a stranger to spiritual enjoyments. For, as much as the mind of man is above the living something that is within the brute, so much is the spirit of the believer above the ordinary mind of the unregenerate man. We have joys, the sweetness of which is such that honey is not to be compared with them. We have bliss, the like of which all Solomon’s wealth could not have purchased. And we have been introduced into a world which is as much fairer than this material universe as the sunlight is better than the darkest midnight of a dungeon.

Oh, that you did all know it! May God, of His grace, give you His Spirit, create you anew, and breathe faith in Jesus into your soul! Then will you know the bliss of meeting with Him and of serving Him. God bless the Word, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ACTS 3:11-26; ACTS 4:1-4; 2 PETER 3

You remember, dear friends, how Peter denied his Lord in the time of His trial. Now notice what a change was wrought in him after the Holy Spirit had fallen upon him on the day of Pentecost. We have often read the story of the man healed at the beautiful gate of the temple, now let us see what followed:

Acts 3:11. *And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.*

It is always easy to draw a crowd, but there was really something wonderful to be seen that day. The apostle was careful to turn to the very best account the curiosity of the crowd. See how quickly he carried their thoughts away from the man before him to the greater Man, the divine Man, the Son of God whom they had rejected.

12-23. *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord*

your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Hear this, then, you who have heard Christ, through His Word and through His servants, and have heard Him preach—ay, scores and hundreds of times. Let me read this text to you again, and as I read it, may it sink into your hearts. “It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”

24-26. *Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

They were to have the first proclamation of the Gospel. From among them would be gathered many of the first converts. The preacher did not know immediately what result this sermon produced. It was not like the sermon preached at Pentecost, for he did know what happened after its delivery. This is quite as good a sermon in every way and we have every reason to believe that many were converted by it. The Spirit of God was with Peter, yet even the Spirit of God does not always work in the same way upon men. You see, the apostles had no opportunity to have a talk with the people afterwards, and to find out what had been done, as they had on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 4:1-4. *And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.*

So that, though they could not tell there and then how many were converted, and though they could not baptize them at once, for they were taken away, yet, though there was no after-meeting, there were probably just as many saved as at Pentecost. Just as grand a result came of it. You cannot judge the result of a sermon on the particular day that it is preached—it may seem as if that sermon had produced no effect and it may be so—but still, this time it was not so.

Whenever you go home sad that you have not had an after-meeting, or you are interrupted and cannot tell what good was done, though you do not know what has been accomplished, the record is in heaven and God will reveal it, by-and-by. And peradventure, even here you will discover that you made a mistake and that the service which seemed lost was one of the most blessed that you ever conducted. God grant that it may be so, for Christ’s sake!

Now let us read Peter’s second epistle, the third chapter.

2 Peter 3:1-3. *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*

This prophecy is most certainly being fulfilled in these days.

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

“Inviolable laws still govern the material creation. Men are still swift to sin. Oppressors are not overthrown and oftentimes, the good are left to languish in poverty and suffering. ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’”

5. *For this they willingly are ignorant of,—*

Ignorant that there has been one great interposition of God to avenge the insults to His holy law and to overturn the rule of sin. “For this they willingly are ignorant of,”—

5-6. *That by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:*

God did destroy man, and sweep away sin, with water once.

7. *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

There will come a second interposition—we know not when, but assuredly it shall come. And if the visitation tarry, we must wait for it, for it shall come—it will not really tarry, however long it may seem to be delayed.

8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

There are no years to Him. There are no days to the great Ancient of days. A thousand years must seem to be a mere speck in comparison with His everlasting existence—as a dream when one awakes, it has swiftly passed away. But God still remains.

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Therefore does He wait. If men ask why there is no interposition of wrath to overthrow the ungodly, the answer is because this is part of God’s great reign of love. He waits, because He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yet there will be a limit even to His patience.

10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

The next and great judgment will be by fire.

11-12. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

This should be the practical outcome of the anticipation of coming judgment. Let us look on “all these things” as passing away.

13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

The end of this world will be the beginning of a new and better one, of which “righteousness” will be the great characteristic.

14. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

There is, again, the practical note.

15-16. *And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

The Scriptures are given for our learning and rightly used, guide us to the Savior. Yet alas! some “wrest” them “unto their own destruction.” Let none of us ever be found committing such fatal folly as that.

17-18. *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

I should like to point out to young Christians and to all Christian people, how Peter finishes this epistle, first with a warning and then with a counsel. He says, “Beware lest ye be led away,” and then he puts in a “but”—“but grow in grace.”

If you go into a plantation at a certain time of the year, you may see a great number of trees that have no leaves on them. How are you to know which are alive and which are not? Well, you would soon know if you could look at their roots. If a tree has been growing, if its roots have taken hold upon the

soil, you may pull it, but you will not stir it. There it stands, and in like manner, growth in grace brings fixity in grace. You who have faith, pray God that you may have growing faith. A living faith is a growing faith, and a growing faith is a living faith. Pray, therefore, that you may “grow in grace.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—974, 814

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