

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST'S COVENANT

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*“As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant
 I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”
 Zechariah 9:11*

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this same subject are #277, The Blood of the everlasting covenant
 and #1186, The Blood of the covenant]

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Verses 11 and 12 are #2839, “Prisoners of Hope”
 and #2883, Prisoners Delivered]

THE LORD is here speaking to His ancient people, Israel. That nation had always been preserved, although other nations had been destroyed—and the reason was that God had entered into a covenant with Abraham on their behalf. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant, so that God could truly speak of “the blood of thy covenant.”

The Jews have never ceased to be a nation, though they have been scattered, and peeled, and delivered over into the hand of their adversaries because of their sins. They may enjoy various rights and privileges in the different countries where they sojourn for a while, but they cannot be absorbed into the nationalities by which they are surrounded. They must always be a separate and distinct people—and the day shall yet come when the branches of the olive tree, which have been so long cut off, shall be grafted in again. Then shall they, as a nation, again behold the Messiah, the true and only King of the Jews—and their fullness shall be the fullness of the Gentiles also.

All believers have some share in that covenant made with Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful. We who believe in Jesus are of the seed of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise, and we are pressed by a covenant which, like that made with Abraham, is signed and sealed with blood even “the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

We, too, are saved and kept as a separate and distinct people, not because of any natural goodness in us, or because of our superiority over others, but solely and entirely because the Lord has made an eternal covenant concerning us, which is “ordered in all things and sure,” because Jesus Christ is Himself the Surety on our behalf that its guarantees and pledges shall all be carried into effect.

I. So, applying our text to the covenant people of God in all ages, we have first to consider THEIR NATURAL AND YET PRIVILEGED CONDITION. By nature they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, but by grace they are in covenant relationship to God.

Brethren and sisters in Christ, *when we were in our natural state, we were like prisoners.* A prisoner is one who has lost his liberty—and that was our condition before Jesus met with us and set us free. We were “carnal, sold under sin,” in bondage to our own lusts and held captive by the devil at his will. No doubt we boasted of our free will, but our will itself was enslaved with all the rest of our powers.

There is no greater mockery than to call a sinner a free man. Show me a convict toiling in the chain gang and call him a free man if you will. Point out to me the galley slave chained to the oar and smarting under the taskmaster’s lash whenever he pauses to draw a breath, and call him a free man if you will, but never call a sinner a free man, even in his will, as long as he is the slave of his own corruptions.

In our natural state we wore chains, not upon our limbs, but upon our hearts—fettters that bound us and kept us from God, from rest, from peace, from holiness—from anything like freedom of heart and conscience and will. The iron entered into our soul and there is no other slavery as terrible as that. As there is no freedom like the freedom of the spirit, so is there no slavery that is at all comparable to the bondage of the heart.

A prisoner is also one who feels that he cannot escape from his prison and that is how we felt. We began to have longings after better things. A heavenly visitor came to us and dropped a new and strange thought into our minds—and we began to pant after something higher and nobler than this poor world could give us—but we could not reach it, for we were prisoners. We could not escape from the cruel grip of our captor and it became quite clear to us that we could never be delivered from the house of bondage by any power of our own.

Do you not remember, my brother, when you used to sorrowfully say,—

*“I would, but cannot pray
I would, but can't repent”—*

and when you could use Paul's words as your own and sadly cry, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”? You were still a prisoner, yet you were beginning to be one of the “prisoners of hope.”

That is a strange kind of prison that is mentioned in the text—“the pit wherein is no water.” In the East, pits were frequently used as prisons. When a tyrant king wished to keep anyone in safe custody, and also in ignominy, and shame, and sorrow, he would have him cast into one of these waterless pits, where the poor prisoner would be beyond human sight or hearing—and with no possible hope of deliverance from his doleful dungeon.

Such was our sad state by nature, and well do we remember our first efforts to obtain release. We were in dense darkness and we felt all round the walls of our prison to try to find a door, or window, or ladder by which we might escape, but all in vain. We tried to look up, but we seemed to have been thrust, like Paul and Silas, into some inner prison where no ray of light could penetrate. The fact that there was “no water” in our prison-pit made our agonies all the more terrible.

Those of you who have passed through that state of deep conviction of sin know that, in such circumstances, there is no comfort for the present and no hope for the future—as to the past, there is nothing to look back upon but sin—and as to the future, there is nothing “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

To a sinner in that condition, there seems nothing within but a heart as hard as adamant, nothing beneath but a gapping hell, and nothing around but thick darkness. How dreary and dreadful is the state of man by nature—and how painfully conscious he is of his true condition when the Holy Spirit reveals it to him! Then is he indeed like a prisoner in a “pit wherein is no water.”

This is the actual state, by nature, of all the elect—they are prisoners, just as other men are—and they are in as dark and dismal a pit and they have as little comfort in it as the very worst of mankind have. *Yet, by grace, they are in an altogether different condition from that of others*, for they are in covenant with God though they are not yet aware of that blessed and comforting truth.

God's election of His people took place long before their creation. Those whom He has chosen unto eternal life were given to Christ in the covenant of grace, in that eternity of which we can form so slight a conception. And when they were born into this world, though they were born in sin and grew up to be the children of disobedience—enemies to God by wicked works—yet the covenant made with Christ on their behalf remained unbroken all the while.

“Well,” says someone, “that is strange.” Yes, it is strange, but it is true. We must never forget that we were under a covenant of works long before we were born. Adam stood as our federal head and representative in that covenant. You, my Sister, never put out your hand to pluck the forbidden fruit—

and you and I, my brother, never partook of it, yet we all have to share the consequences of Adam's transgression because he was our covenant head.

Do you demur to that and say that it was unjust to visit upon us the sin of another? If you do, then you must equally object to the Gospel plan of salvation by the righteousness and death of Another, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the one great federal Head and Representative of all who believe in Him.

He took the place of the countless myriads of His elect who had been given to Him by His Father, and died on Calvary's cross in their stead, although great numbers of them had not then been born, and consequently could not have any virtue or merit of their own. Through His substitutionary sacrifice, they were even then "accepted in the Beloved" and in the fullness of time, they become believers in Him and so enter consciously into the enjoyment of the covenant privileges which had been conferred upon them from eternity. The covenant is not made with them when they believe in Jesus—it was made on their behalf by the Father and the Son in the eternal council chamber long before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round.

See, then, the twofold condition of the chosen—they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, yet is there an eternal covenant concerning them which guarantees that they shall be brought out of the bondage of their sins and shall be set at liberty forever. Does someone here say, "I trust that such a blessed covenant as that has been made on my behalf"?

Dear brother or sister, if you have a sincere longing to be a sharer in the blessings of the covenant of grace, methinks that is a proof that you have an interest in it already. And if you will, at this moment, put your soul's trust in that precious blood that is their sign and seal of the covenant, then you may rest assured that grace has inscribed your name from all eternity in God's eternal book.

II. Now let us turn to the second part of our subject which is THE MEANS OF THE DELIVERANCE OF THESE COVENANTED ONES—AND THE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DELIVERANCE.

The text says, "*By the blood of thy covenant* I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." I think this means, first, that *the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the essential matter of the covenant*. In order to make the conditions of the eternal covenant effective for His people, it was necessary that Christ should be obedient unto death and that His blood should be shed for many for the remission of their sins.

When, by faith, I look upon the blood of Jesus—whether I see it streaming down in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane or flowing in the crimson rivulets at Gabbatha or in the sacred streams of Golgotha, I see in that precious blood of Christ the essential matter of the covenant, and I sing, with sadness on His account, but with rejoicing on my own,—

*"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atonement blood;
By divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!"*

Yes, O blessed Jesus, You have fulfilled on our behalf Your part of the eternal covenant, and You have met all the demands of infinite justice even to the uttermost farthing! Your Father justly requires perfect obedience to His holy law and You have rendered it in Your pure and spotless life. The offended majesty of that law demands adequate punishment for man's multiplied violations of its just requirements—and Your one infinite sacrifice has fully paid the penalty, so that divine justice is completely satisfied and the dishonored law is magnified and glorified. Thus it is that God can "be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," for in the person, and life, and death of Christ, their covenant Head and Representative, all claims upon believers have been discharged forever.

Further, *the blood of Jesus is also the seal of the covenant*. Speaking after the manner of men, until the blood of Jesus had been shed, the covenant was not signed, and sealed, and ratified. It was like a will that could only become valid by the death of the testator. It is true that there was such perfect unity of heart between the Father and the Son, and such mutual foreknowledge that the covenant would be ratified in due time, that multitudes of the chosen ones were welcomed to heaven in anticipation of the redemption which would actually be accomplished by Christ upon the cross.

But when Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of men, and in our human nature suffered and died upon the accursed tree, He did, as it were, write His name in crimson characters upon the eternal covenant and thus sealed it with His blood. It is because the blood of Jesus is the seal of this covenant that it has such power to bless us and is the means of lifting us up out of the prison-pit wherein is no water.

Let me put it thus to some of you who have long been under conviction of sin. You have been trying in your poor way to keep the law of God, but you have utterly failed to do so. You know that there are many precious promises in God's Word, but you get no comfort from them. Why is that? You feel that you are like a prisoner in a pit—and that you are shut away from the presence of the thrice-holy God—and that His awful attribute of justice bars your way like the flaming sword at the gate of paradise, so that you cannot come near to Him.

Then you listen to the Gospel, of which the sum and substance is this—that Jesus Christ has fully atoned for the sins of all His people, that He has suffered everything that they deserved to suffer, and that God has accepted His substitutionary sacrifice as a sufficient atonement for all who believe in Him. As soon as you trust Him, you are lifted up out of the prison-pit, your feet are set upon a rock and a song of grateful praise is put into your mouth.

You are not afraid of the sword of divine justice now—nay, you go and stand beneath the flashing blade and trust to it to defend you against all your adversaries. You rightly say, "As Jesus suffered in my place, justice demands that I should go free. He has discharged all my liabilities, so the law has no longer any terror to me." So you see, beloved, how the blood of Christ's covenant brings the poor, trembling, despairing soul up out of that dread prison "wherein is no water."

Now I want, dear friends, to ask you all to answer honestly one or two questions that I am about to put to you. The first is—Do you know what it means to be delivered from that pit by the blood of Christ's covenant? Perhaps I ought first of all to ask—Do you know what it means to be a prisoner in that pit wherein is no water?

Have you ever moaned and groaned under the weight of your sin? Have you ever smarted under the lash of that ten-thonged whip of the law? Has your conscience itself been sufficiently awakened as to condemn you? Have you ever been brought to such a state of self-despair that you could see nothing but death and damnation written upon everything that pertains to you?

Was your comeliness withered, your strength dried up, and thy pride humbled, so that you had to sit in sackcloth and ashes and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" as the leper of old had to warn others to keep away from him? If not, I fear that you have never proved the power of the blood of the covenant, for he who has never been humbled has never been exalted.

I feel sure that some of us here can answer, "Oh, yes! We remember well when we were humbled so that we felt ourselves to be less than nothing and vanity—and we realized that, by nature, we were totally ruined and undone—and blessed be God, we also recollect the time when a power, infinitely above our own, drew us up out of the pit in which we were imprisoned."

But my dear hearers, have you also been conscious of the working of this almighty power? Have you felt a mysterious influence, which you could not comprehend, drawing you out of your natural state, and giving you new thoughts, new desires, new hopes, new joys, and also new pains? Certainly you have never been delivered from this waterless prison by any power less than the divine, so if God's hand has not yet been stretched out on your behalf, you are still in the pit. Or as Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, you are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Is there anyone here who is in that pit, yet who earnestly longs to escape from it? Is your soul yearning to be delivered, not only from the consequences of sin, but from the sin itself? Are you panting after reconciliation with God and acceptance in the Beloved? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then you are already among those whom the Savior calls blessed and to whom He has given that gracious promise, “they shall be filled.”

Such longings as these grow not in nature's soul—they are the product of divine grace. Therefore, be very thankful for them, for they are at least hopeful indications of the Holy Spirit's working within you. And you may rest assured that where He has begun a good work, He will continue it until He brings it to perfection. He will never lift you part of the way out of the pit and then let you fall back again into the prison—He will bring you right out, even as the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched-out arm.

If you have been delivered, I feel sure that you will prize your deliverance. I would give little for what you call your grace if you would not willingly part with all else that you have rather that part with that. A slave who has been set free will value his liberty beyond all price. The man who can talk lightly of being free, never knew what bondage meant.

I fear that none of us think highly enough of what the Lord has done for us. We get to worrying ourselves because He has not done more for us, because we are not yet perfect—how much better it would be if we would praise and bless Him for all that He has done for us! Remember that you are a free man even though some links of your chain are still clinging to you. Thank God that the chain is broken and that the last links shall soon be snapped—and you shall be perfectly delivered from the badge of bondage. Therefore be of good courage, and prize your deliverance, and praise Him who has done such great things for you.

Surely, too, if you have been drawn out of this pit wherein is no water, you will love your Deliverer and you will desire above everything else to live to Him and to labor for Him all your life.

I hope you can truthfully say to your Lord,—

*“Have Thou a lamb in all Thy flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have Thou a foe, before whose face
I fear Thy cause to plead?”*

*“Thou know'st I love Thee, dearest Lord;
But oh, I love to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love Thee more.”*

I trust that you have dedicated yourself wholly to your Lord—perhaps not in writing, yet just as truly as if you had set your signature to such a covenant as some have felt moved to leave upon record. If you have resolved thus in your heart, you can say with me at the moment, “Lord Jesus, I am Yours—body, soul, and spirit—wholly Yours, only Yours, ever Yours. You have bought me for Yourself, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with Your own most precious blood and therefore You shall have me, with all my powers, all my possessions, all my possibilities, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. I give all up to You absolutely without reserve, that You may do with me whatever You please, and whatever will bring most glory to Your holy name. I fear there is much dross still remaining in me—all the gold You have Yourself given to me in Your wondrous grace. If it seems good in Your sight, put me into the hottest furnace, but O Lord, do take away all the dross, and then fashion me into a vessel meet for Your own use!” The man who can truthfully talk thus to the Lord Jesus is in the covenant, and by the blood of the covenant he has been brought forth out of the prison wherein is no water.

Perhaps you are afraid to say as much as this, lest it should seem to be presumption on your part. Well then, possibly you can say, "I dare not talk as some do about their attainments in spiritual things, but I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, my sole reliance is upon His perfect righteousness and His one great sacrifice for sin."

Then, my brother or my sister, you are amongst those who have built upon the rock and you shall be preserved in the greatest storm that can ever beat upon you. You are no longer a prisoner in the pit wherein is no water. Faith in Jesus is not the heritage of the slaves of sin and Satan—it is the portion of those who are free men and free women in Christ Jesus—and if He has made you free, you are free indeed, and you can never be enslaved again.

You are at liberty to walk wherever you will on all the holy land which is the purchase possession of the children of the King. Every promise that He has given to His chosen people is a promise to you, so take full advantage of all thy privileges as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are now His and you shall be His when this world is on fire and when all things that are of time and sense shall perish in the last great conflagration. You shall be His amid the pomp and terrors of that tremendous day and you shall be His amidst the splendor and glory of eternity.

If any here are still prisoners in the pit wherein is no water, may the Lord even now bring them forth by the blood of His covenant, that they may share with all the chosen ones all the blessings of that covenant now and to all eternity. And to Him shall be the praise and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ZECHARIAH 9; 10

As we read these ancient prophecies, we will not only notice how exactly they have been fulfilled, but we will also try to learn the lesson that they are intended to teach us.

Zechariah 9:1-4. *The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.*

Alexander the Great besieged Tyre and utterly overthrew it. The citizens thought that their "strong hold" was impregnable, but they had at last to surrender to the mighty monarch whose attacks they had so long resisted. All the mercenaries whom they could procure with their heaped-up silver and gold could not avert the doom which the Lord had foretold and which, through the instrumentality of Alexander, He accomplished—"The Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea."

5-8. *Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.*

When Phoenicia had fallen into the hands of the conqueror, there was no power able to avert the overthrow of Philistia. And Jerusalem would also have come beneath his sway had not the Lord miraculously interposed for its preservation. Alexander was restrained by a power which perhaps he did not understand, but which he could not resist, so he passed by the holy city of which the temple of the Lord was the glory in the midst. They who are divinely protected are in absolute safety even in the most perilous times. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

9. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

You know how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem—when the multitudes welcomed Him with hosannas—probably the same crowds that soon hoarsely shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

10. *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

He shall yet be acclaimed as the universal Monarch, “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” for, “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”

11-12. *As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;*

This “stronghold” is very different from that of Tyre, which failed her in her hour of need. It is indeed that of which the prophet Nahum wrote—“The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”

13. *For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.*

Note well that it is the Lord who is doing all these notable deeds—bending Judah like a bow, fitting Ephraim to the bow as the archer presses his arrow to the string, and raising up the despised sons of Zion so that they may be able to overcome the proud sons of Greece. “The sword of a mighty man” owes its strength to the hand that wields it, and the sons of Zion are only mighty when the Lord holds them in His almighty hand and uses them as seems good in His sight.

14. *And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*

Then, how safe must the Lord's people be, and what terror must spread among their enemies!

15. *The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*

There seems to be a hint here of the strange scene that was witnessed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the unbelieving mockers said of the Spirit-filled disciples, “There men are full of new wine,” but Peter repudiated the slander, and declared that the wonder which the people could not comprehend was really the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, “It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.”

16. *And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.*

See how many metaphors the prophet was inspired to use in a single verse in describing the Lord's chosen ones—“as the flock of his people...as the stones of a crown...as an ensign upon his land.” No human language can fully set forth all that their Lord thinks of them and all that they are in His esteem.

17. *For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.*

Zechariah 10:1. *Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.*

The atheistic philosopher of the present day laughs at such a verse as this and sneeringly asks, “What possible connection can there be between men and women praying to God and the showers of rain which fall upon the earth? Why,” he says “according to the laws of nature, showers fall at such and such

seasons, and if the atmosphere should not happen to be in such and such a state, all the praying in the world cannot produce a single drop of rain.”

But faith can clearly see where reason is blind—and the prayer of faith moves the arm of God and the arm of God controls what the philosopher calls the “laws of nature,” and so the rain descends. Let us learn from this precept and promise, the power of believing prayer. Prayer has the key of nature as well as the key of heaven hanging at her girdle.

Observe also that, when we have received one mercy from the Lord, we are to go on to pray for another. These people must have had “the former rain,” yet they were to ask for “the latter rain” also. And if you, dear friends, have had “the former rain” of conversion, go on to ask the Lord for “the latter rain” of sanctification, if, in our church fellowship, we have had “the former rain” of gracious additions to our numbers, we must ask for “the latter rain” by praying that God would continue thus to bless us. When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us—but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain to pour out floods of mercy.

2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain:

Observe the readiness of man to forsake the great fountain of living waters and to make unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water. Notice, too, that some sort of comfort may, for a time, be derived from a false trust, but it is “comfort in vain.” As a dream yields no comfort when a man wakes up and finds himself to not be rich—as he had vainly dreamed that he was—but miserably poor, so all confidence in the flesh, all reliance upon anything except the almighty arm of God, even if it should yield us temporary hope and consolation, will only make our grief the greater when its utter failure is discovered.

2. Therefore the people wend their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd.

The sheep that belong to Christ's flock will never find any true shepherd except Him who is “the good Shepherd.” If, for a time, they should so lose their spiritual wits as to follow strangers—which, indeed, is not a natural thing for them to do, for “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers”—they will meet with a thousand troubles because they have no shepherd.

3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats:

Whenever people are afflicted with unfaithful ministers, when God comes to visit these people, He will not only punish the ministers, but the religious leaders, the false professors in those churches, the he-goats who led the flock astray. Oh, what a plague and a curse will an unfaithful minister be found to have been at the last day! A well which only yields bitter water, like that of Marah, merely mocks a temporary thirst. But a minister who does not preach the Gospel and who does not live the Gospel, mocks the soul's eternal thirst.

Whatever I may be, God grant that I may never be an unfaithful preacher of His Word! Surely, if there be an innermost hell, a place where the soul's feet shall be made more fast in the stocks of the pit than anywhere else, it shall be reserved for the man who, professing to be an instructor of the ignorant and a leader of the flock, taught them falsehood and led them out of the way. May the Lord save us from shepherds against whom His anger must be kindled!

3. For for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

As an expert horseman skillfully controls his steed and turns it according to his pleasure in the day of battle, and makes it obey himself alone, so does the Lord rein in and direct His church, so that she becomes like a “goodly horse in the battle.”

4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Let us learn from this verse that everything comes from the Lord of hosts, the God of providence as well as of grace. Those statesmen, who are the cornerstones of the great building of state, must come from Him. Those Christian men and women of experience who seem to be as the cornerstones of our spiritual building must come from Him. Those who are as nails, upon whom weaker Christians seem to hang, come from Him.

And whoever is, in the day of battle, like God's bow, must also come from Him, for apart from the Lord there is no strength, nor power, nor wit, nor wisdom amongst all His people. We must learn, then, to lift up our eye unto God and look to Him for all that we need whether it be political, social, or religious needs that are to be supplied—all must come from Him.

5. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

The Jewish infantry often turned to flight the Syrian cavalry, and I may fitly compare the apostles of old to humble fighters upon foot, while heathen and other philosophers were like mighty men on horseback, yet they were turned back by the apparently weaker warriors of the cross—and it is so still. We can well afford to give our adversaries every advantage that they can ask—let them have State patronage, let them have worldly dignity, let them have learning, let them have wealth—yet, in the name of God will we vanquish them, for the truth of God is mightier than all the wisdom of man and the weakness of God is stronger than the greatest strength of man.

6. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. [See Sermon #2588, Perfect Restoration]

See, beloved, how the everlasting covenant is the great foundation of everything for the saints. "I am JEHOVAH their God," says He. The Lord has taken His people to be His own forever and therefore, though He may seem temporarily to reject them, yet permanently and everlastingly He will hold them fast and acknowledge them as His people.

7. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.

Get a firm hold of this promise, believers, and plead it. Are you dull and heavy, desponding and sad? Then plead this promise, "Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD."

8. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

The word, "hiss," is supposed by some to be an allusion to the Eastern custom of men who managed bees making a sound like hissing in order to gather them into the hive. Others, however, translate the word "piping," as the shepherd pipes to his flock and they gather round him. In the words, "I will gather them, for I have redeemed them," we see that particular redemption is the groundwork of effectual calling—those whom Jesus Christ has bought with His precious blood, the Holy Spirit will call by power out from the rest of mankind.

9-11. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction,

In the restoration of Israel, there is to be an even greater triumph than that which was achieved at the Red Sea.

11. And shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away.

For the glory of God in the deliverance of His people is sure to be attended by another form of glory in the destruction of His enemies. Christ is a sweet Savior unto God both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

12. *And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.*

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