

EVERYWHERE AND YET FORGOTTEN

NO. 326

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?
In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”
Job 12:9-10*

THESE verses occur in Job’s answer to Zophar the Naamathite. Job had his failings, but certainly he appears less faulty in this dialog than those three men who sought to reprove him and convict him of error. Zophar the Naamathite had the very highest opinion of his own personal wisdom. He addressed Job as though he had been an inferior, and in the eleventh chapter he used language which though extremely beautiful, must have been very grating upon the ear of such a sufferer as Job, for it is a lecture full of high-flown language, abounding in poetry and noble images, but containing little solid sense and less sympathy.

Job being exceedingly irritated both with the style and with the matter of Zophar’s speech, begins at once to pluck off his plumes and to pull to pieces his fine language. In biting irony Job cries from his dunghill—“No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these?”

You have put into flowery language things which an ordinary observer might discover. You have pointed to the heaven above, and to the depth beneath, to prove a truth which the creeping insect of the earth could tell you, and which the fishes of the sea might proclaim. “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?”

There is much temper here, but there is very much also of good common sense. I would we had another Job to chastise the high-sounding language of modern theologians. There are starting up in our midst men, who if they are not heretics in doctrine, are aliens in speech. They are men described by the old preachers who say, “Mark!” and there is nothing to mark, and who shout, “Observe!” and there is nothing to observe, except the want of everything that is worth observing.

We know ministers who cannot speak in the common language of mankind, but must needs adopt the jargon of Carlyle, who sets language on its head, and puts the last word first. These men must needs make the English language a slave to the German—the glorious grand old Saxon must truckle to their heresies and conceal the depths of their falsehoods. I pray God the time may come when some man may unmask them, when all these windbags may be rent, and all these bladders may be pricked, when if teachers have anything to tell us they will deliver themselves so that all can understand. If they cannot use plain language let their tongues go to school till they have learned it.

There is something so enticing and yet so flimsy in the modern theological school, that I feel constrained to warn you constantly against it. Its mystery is absurdity, and its depth is pompous ignorance. There is no theology in it, it is a futile device to conceal the want of theological knowledge. A man with an education that may be complete in every department except that in which he should excel, stands up and would teach Christians that all they have learned at the feet of Paul has been a mistake, that a new theology has been discovered, that the old phrases which we have used are out of date, the old creeds broken up.

Well, what shall we do to this wiseacre and his fellow sages? Serve them, wherever you meet them or their disciples, as Job did Zophar, laugh at them, dash their language to pieces, and remind them that the best things they tell us are only what the fishes of the sea or the fowls of the air, knew before them, and that their grandest discoveries are but platitudes which every child has known before, or else they are heresies that ought to be scouted from the earth.

The doctrine upon which Job spoke was this, he wished to show that the fact of the presence of God in all things was so clearly discernible, that men need not borrow the eagle's wing to mount to heaven, nor need they enter into the bowels of the leviathan to find a chariot wherein to enter the depths of the sea. "No," said he, "no, the present Deity the beasts proclaim." The actual existence and the constant working of the Eternal God is sung by the very fowls of heaven, and the mute fishes of the sea leap up, and in their joyous leavings, seem to say, "The sea is his, and he made it."

This doctrine I wish to bring out this morning, or rather, thus would I speak of it. First, *the present hand of God everywhere in the universe*, secondly, *our present and complete dependence upon that hand of God*, and then let us *learn some useful lessons from the whole subject of divine providence*.

I. The first doctrine is THE PRESENT HAND OF GOD.

1. That there is a God you need not that I should prove, that God is here, and there, and everywhere, you also firmly believe. But alas! it is one thing to believe this truth, and quite another thing to hold it in perpetual remembrance. We may write it down far more easily upon the tables of our creed than upon the tablets of our memory. In fact, *this is one of the doctrines which all men are constantly forgetting*, and even the righteous may often check themselves because they begin to degenerate into the fools who say in their hearts "There is no God here."

Strange is it that the name of the Lord should be written everywhere so clearly that even the blind might see it, and yet man is so doubly dark that he does not observe his God even where God is most manifest and visible. I think, my brethren, this forgetfulness of God is growing upon this perverse generation. Time was, in the old Puritan days, when every shower of rain was seen to come from heaven, when every ray of sunshine was blessed, and God was thanked for having given fair weather to ingather the fruits of the harvest. Then, men talked of God as doing everything.

But in our days where is our God? We have the laws of matter. Alas! Alas! that names with little meaning should have destroyed our memory of the Eternal One. We talk now of phenomena, and of the chain of events, as if all things happened by machinery, as if the world were a huge clock which had been wound up in eternity, and continued to work without a present God. Nay, not only our philosophers, but even our poets rant in the same way. They sing of the works of nature. But who is that fair goddess, nature? Is she a heathen deity or what?

Do we not act as if we were ashamed of our God, or as if His name had become obsolete? Go abroad wherever you may, you hear but little said concerning Him who made the heavens, and who formed the earth and the sea, but everything is nature, and the laws of motion and of matter. And do not Christians often use words which would lead you to suppose that they believed in the old goddess, Luck, or rested in that equally false deity, fortune, or trembled before the demon of misfortune?

Oh for the day when God shall be seen, and little else beside! Better, my brethren, that philosophical discoveries were lost, than that God should be concealed behind them. Better that our poets had ceased to write, and that all their flaming words were buried with their ashes, than that they should serve as a cloud before the face of the Eternal Creator.

We must go back again to the remembrance of our God, and especially must the true believer make the worldling feel that the Christian has a God with him, a God about him, and a God within him, one who is his constant companion and his friend. So act, my brethren, that men may be compelled to say of you, "That man has a God whom he observes in all the events of his family, ascribing to His divine hand every sickness that falls upon his child, and every loss that occurs to him in his business." My brethren, it is a doleful truth that there is nothing more easy to forget than the grand doctrine that God is everywhere at work in the midst of us all.

2. Now, let me proceed to say that though this is a truth so frequently forgotten, it is *a fact of universal force*. God works ever and everywhere. There is no *place* where God is not. You may traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, till you can see but a strip of the blue sky, you may be the only traveler that has passed through that glen, the birds may start up frightened, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of man, but God was there of old, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flower cups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth.

Or descend if you will into the lowest depths of the sea, where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in eternal quiet, but the footsteps of the Lord are there, reigning within the silent palace of the sea. You may borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there. Mount to the highest heaven or dive into the deepest hell, and God is in both, hymned in everlasting song, or howled in eternal tortures. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work.

And not merely, my friends, in every place, but in every *time*, the Lord is present. From the beginning of the year even to the end thereof, there is God. His eyes never sleep, His hand never rests. In the silent watches of midnight when the city sleeps, God is the watchman, and when the sun wakes up and draws aside the curtains of the night the Lord is abroad before him, on the waters and on the snow-white summits of the mountains, and when again high noon is gained, and all the world is busy with its toil and God forgotten, He is there amid the throng of men as well as in the deserts' wilds.

Every place feels *His* footsteps, and every time trembles at His presence. From everlasting to everlasting, O God, You are sensibly felt in every passing moment. The pulsings of the eternal sea of time are caused by You, and there never is an instant when You have fled and left us to ourselves.

And as in every place and every time, so in every *event* there is God. Is the earth shaken by inward convulsions? It is God that heaves the mountains to and fro. Or do the valleys laugh in the sunshine, and do the rejoicing husbandmen carry home their harvests? God is there right manifest in the lavish bounty of his hand. The greatest political disasters are predestinated, guided, and overruled by God. When an Attila scourges the earth and reddens her soil with blood, his steps are ordered, arranged and foreordained, as much as the flight of the eternal angel who shall blow the trumpet of the Gospel and proclaim the year of Jubilee.

There is no event, however base and vile, however grand and good, which is not within the management of the dread Supreme. His dominion has no limit. Even the dark gulf of evil is spanned by the bridge of His wisdom. Journey onward till you seem to go where goodness is not found and grace is all eclipsed, in the thick darkness there He dwells. He makes the clouds His chariot and yokes the whirlwinds to His car. Be of good cheer, beloved, in every event you may behold your God. If invasion should ravage this fair island, if tyrants should set their foot on the neck of your liberties, if the streets should run with blood, God were even there supreme, His people still secure.

And if it be so that God is in every event, permit me to remind you that God is where there is *no event*. When there is a lull upon the waters and all is stagnant, when political affairs are quiet, when in the lesser world of your own house and your own soul there is a dead calm, perhaps the woeful prelude of a tempest, God is there. Great God, You stand in the midst of the silent desert, where not even the hum of the bee disturbs the dread solemnity of stillness! You are far down in the cleft of the rock where creature could not live! Nay, in the bowels of the solid adamant You have Your palace, and beneath the surging of the ever-tossing sea You have a tabernacle.

In the unknown ravine, the untraversed gorge, the Lord JEHOVAH has His dwelling place. He keeps yon rocks from tottering to their fall. He swells those rivers till they roll along. Let Him but remove His hand, and earth's pillars totter to their fall, creation reels, and the universe expires. As dies the spark struck from the steel, so dies creation if God ceases to be present there.

Oh, learn then evermore, that not only in His doings but in His restings, not only in His acting but in His standing still, God is most manifest to you if you will but see Him, if your eyes anointed with

heavenly eye salve are but open to behold your Father and your King. This, I may well say, is a truth which though much forgotten is of universal force.

3. Let me proceed a little further and remind you that this is *a truth worthy of perpetual remembrance*. Do not look at it as a mere speculation. I beseech you do not think of a present God as a fact in which you have no interest. There is scarcely a truth in the compass of revelation which is more instructive, profitable, and consoling to the people of God than this—a present God in everything. Come let me show you how worthy a remembrance it is. You have many *mercies*, your God is in them all. Does not that thought sweeten the bread you eat? Will it not give a relish to the water that you drink? The air you breathe, the clothes that are on your back, God is in each of them.

Go to your home, where your best pleasures dwell, your own sweet home, be it never so homely, and when you look on your mercies say, “I see my gracious God here.” Cast your eye upon the prattlers that climb your knee, and remember that they are a heritage from the Lord. Look at her who is the partner of your bosom, and see God’s love and kindness in so good a gift. Look on all the prosperity that attends your business, look on your growing crops and your verdant fields, and see God in every mercy you receive.

I would not have the worldling’s wealth, for it is a wealth that came not from God, at least so far as he is concerned it came not from a Father’s hand. But oh, to have benefits every one of which smells of the treasury out of which it came, to look on your gold and on your silver, nay on your very pence, and see the impress of your God stamped there more clearly than the image of Caesar’s own self—to sit down to your table and eat and drink, and feel that every meal is a sacrament, that every robe you wear is a vestment sent from heaven, that in all these mercies there is the hand of a covenant, promise-keeping God—why it will make you live a noble life.

It was thought by the old heathens to be the grandest thing they could say of a man that he should one day eat at the tables of the gods. My brethren, we eat at these tables every day. At the table of my God I feast, and from His cup I drink. I have nothing which I have not received from Him, the Lord hath given me all that I have.

But if it be very sweet to see God in our mercies, it is most consoling to discern Him in all our *trials*. Say not these are evil times. No times are evil where God is, for His presence scatters all that is ill. Say not that you dwell in an evil place, there is no evil place to the man who dwells with God. Think not that evil circumstances have happened unto you, they seem to be big with evil, but those clouds shall break in blessings on your head.

Oh, if you can but look at your troubles as sent from God, it will take the sharpness from them, and turn them from wasps that sting into bees that gather honey. Say now when your family is sick, “The Lord hath placed His hand upon my wife and on my children,” and when your treasure vanishes away, say, “The Lord hath put His hands into my coffers and emptied them,” and when the ship is wrecked, say, “The Lord hath cast my vessel on the rocks,” and when the corn is spoiled and the harvest is not gathered, say, “The Lord hath sent the rain from heaven. He hath done it.”

Join with Job the author of our text, and exclaim, “The LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the LORD.” Regard not the second causes but the first cause, not the trying creature but the supporting Creator.

If it be pleasant to see God in our trials, I add it is very seasonable to remember Him in our *dangers*. To be at sea when every timber creaks in the ship and when the mast is strained, and then to feel, “He holds the waves in the hollow of his hand,” to stand in places where the danger is threatening and terrific, and then to say, “My Father’s shield is over me,” to walk through the midst of plague and pestilence, through the valleys that are steaming with miasma and malaria, and to feel that God holds our breath, and that all the arrows that death ever stored within his quiver can never find a place in our heart until JEHOVAH bids them.

Oh, these things are sweet and pleasant! A man is never in danger when he feels this. At God's command, through death's dominions and through hell's domains, a man might march securely trusting in the voice which cries, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

A present God! My brethren, I cannot suggest a theme that may make you more full of courage in times of danger and trouble. I think I need not enlarge upon this point further than to add, you will find it exceedingly helpful and consoling if you can discover God in your *trifles*. Our life is made up of trifles, and if we had a God only for the great things and not for the little things, we should be miserable indeed.

If we had a God of the temple and not a God of the tents of Jacob, where were we? But blessed be our heavenly Father, He that wings an angel guides a sparrow, He that rolls a world along molds a tear and marks its orbit when it trickles from its source. There is a God in the motion of a grain of dust blown by the summer's wind, as much as in the revolutions of the stupendous planet. There is a God in the sparkling of a firefly, as truly as in the flaming comet.

Carry home, I beseech you, to your houses the thought that God is *there*, at your table, in your bedchamber, in your workroom, and at your counter. Recognize the doing and being of God in every little thing. Think for a moment, and you will find that there are many promises of Scripture giving the sweetest consolation in trivial matters. "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands." Why? Lest you fall from a precipice? Lest you dash yourself from a pinnacle? No, "*Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" A little danger, but a great providence to ward us from it.

And what says the Scripture also? Does it say, "The very days of your life are numbered?" It saith not so, though that were true, but "the very *hairs of your head* are all numbered." And what says the Scripture, yet again? Does it say, "The Lord knoweth the eagles, and not an eagle falleth to the ground without your Father?" No, but "are not two *sparrows* sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." A great God in little things. I am sure it will spare you a world of vexation if you will but remember this, for it is hence our vexations come.

We often get into a bad temper about a trifle, when a great trial does not agitate us. We are angry because we have scalded ourselves with a little water or have lost a button from our clothes, and yet the greatest calamity can scarcely disturb us. You smile, because it is true with all of you. Job himself, who said, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away," might have grown angry because of some rough edge in his potsherd. Take care that you see God in little things, that your mind may be always calm and composed, and that you be not foolish enough to suffer a trifle to overcome a saint of God.

II. Now, my dear friends, having thus brought forward the doctrine of a God present everywhere, let me remind you of the second head—OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON A PRESENT GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT.

We are absolutely dependent upon the will and pleasure of God for our life, our comforts, our means to enjoy our comforts, and especially for all spiritual blessings.

First then, *our life is entirely dependent upon God*. One sees strange sights in journeying, scenes which will never be erased from the memory. It was but a few days ago, just under a tremendous rock, I saw a vast mass of broken stones and earth tossed about in wild confusion and raised in huge hillocks. My driver said to me, "That is the grave of a village."

Some years ago there lived upon that spot a joyful and happy people. They went forth to their daily work, they ate, they drank, as men do to this day. One time they saw a great crack in the mountain that hung overhead, they heard alarming noises, but they had heard such sounds before, and the old men said, "There might be something coming, but they did not know."

On a sudden, however, without further notice, the whole side of the hill was in motion, and before the villager could escape from his hut, the village was buried beneath the fallen rocks. And there it lies, and neither bone of man, nor piece of the habitation of man has ever been discovered in the wreck, so thoroughly was everything crushed and buried, that nothing by the most diligent search could ever be discovered.

There are many villages standing in a like position at this day. I passed another spot where there was a shelving mountain with its layers slanting towards the valley. A town which had been built at the foot had been entirely covered, and a lake filled up by one tremendous slide from the top of the hill. Yet, there stand new houses still, and men venture to live among the graves of their sires.

We are apt to say, "How these people ought to look up every morning and say, 'O Lord, spare this village.'" Standing there where they might be crushed in a moment, where the slightest motion of the earth within would bring down the hill upon them, they ought to lift up their hearts to the Preserving One and say, "Oh Thou keeper of Israel, keep us both day and night."

Ah, but my friends, you and I are in the same position. Though no beetling crags overhang our homesteads, though no mountain threatens to leap upon our city, yet are there a thousand gates to death. There are other agencies beside these, which can hurry mortals to their tombs. You are sitting today as near to the jaws of death, as those villagers who are dwelling there. Oh that you felt it! One breath choked up, and you are dead.

Perhaps your life is a thousand times in danger every moment. As many times as there are ebbing and flowing of the blood, as many times as there are breathing from the lungs, so many times does your life hang in such jeopardy that it only needs your God to will it, and you fall dead in your seat, and are carried out a pale lifeless corpse.

There are parts of the mountain passes of the Alps of such danger to the traveler, that when you traverse them in winter, the muleteers muffle the bells of their beasts, lest the faintest sound should bring down an avalanche of snow, and sweep you into the bottomless precipice beneath. *Then*, one would think, the traveler must feel that he is in God's hand.

Ay, but you are in the same position now, though you see it not. Open but the eyes of your spirit, and you may see the avalanche overhanging you today, and the rock trembling to its fall at this very moment. Only let your soul behold the latent lightnings that God conceals within His hand, and you may soon see that to crush a gnat with your finger is not so easy for you, as for God to take away your life now, or whensoever He pleases.

As it is with our life, my brethren, so is it with the *comforts of life*. What would life be without its comforts? Much more, what would it be without its necessities? And yet how absolutely dependent are we upon God for the bread which is the staff of life! I never felt more truly the dependence of man upon his God than I did last Friday week. At the foot of the Alpine pass of the Splügen, I saw in the distance, the whole road black, as if it had been spread over with heaps of black earth.

As we neared it, we discovered it was a mass of locusts in full march—tens of thousands of myriads of them. As we drew nearer they divided as regularly as if they had been an army, and made room for the carriage. No sooner was it passed than the ranks were filled up again, and they went on in their devouring march. On we went for several miles, and there was nothing to be seen except these creatures, literally covering the ground here and there in thick layers like a shower of black snow.

Then I realized the language of the prophet—"Before them was like Eden; behind them was a desert." They had eaten up every green blade. There stood the Indian corn with just the dry stems, but every green particle was gone. In the front of their march you saw the vines beginning to ripen, and the fields of grain hastening to perfection.

There stood the poor cottager at his door, the wheat that he had planted, and the vines that he had tended, must all be eaten and devoured before his eyes. The pastures were literally alive with these fiery creatures. When they first entered the field there was green pasture for the cows of the poor cottagers, let them stop there an hour, and you might take up the dust by handfuls, and nothing left besides.

"Ah!" said my guide, "it is a sad thing for these poor people, in a month's time those creatures will be as big and as long as my finger, and then they will eat up the trees—the mulberry trees with which the poor men feed their silkworms, and which furnish them with a little wealth, they will devour every green thing until there is nothing left but the bare dry stems." In armies countless as the sands of the sea,

and fierce to look upon, well described by the prophet Joel, in his terrible picture of them, as “a great army of the Lord.”

Ah, I thought within myself, if God can thus sweep this valley and make a waste of it with these little creatures, what a mercy it is that He is a kind and gracious God, or else He might let loose the like on all the people of the earth, and then nothing would stare us in the face but famine, despair, and death.

Perhaps you say to me, “Ah! but we do not expect the locusts here, we shall gather our harvests joyously.” Speak not too quickly. God has been teaching us during the last two months our absolute and entire dependence upon Him. Let this rain continue but a little longer, let it continue till the appointed weeks of harvest shall come, and where are our people then? You may open your shops, you citizens of London, and you may imagine that the harvest in the country will little affect you, but famine stares you in the face unless God withdraws the clouds and bids the sun shine down upon us.

The days shall come which we have heard our fathers speak of, when the bread was such that it could not be eaten, when it was not hard enough for one to hold in his hand, when you had a crust without, and then within it was a mass of jelly, wheat swimming in water, and not capable of being eaten by any except those pinched by hunger. The like must inevitably come unless God withdraw those clouds. Let the rain continue much longer, and there will scarcely be a harvest, nothing for men to feed upon.

Oh, my dear friends, we never know from year to year how dependent, how absolutely dependent we are upon God. Does not the corn spring out of the land? and does not every man, from the king to the peasant, live on bread? And if that staff fail, must not all totter to the ground with leanness on our bones and paleness on our face? You are for that bread, and for that nourishment, and for all you have, as absolutely dependent upon God as a prisoner in his dungeon is dependent upon his keeper for his daily bread and water. Oh that I could make you feel this and realize the force of the fact!

Again, I said we were not simply dependent upon God for the comforts, but for *the power to enjoy the comforts*. It is an evil which we have seen under the sun—a man who had wealth, and riches, and plenty, but who had not power to eat thereof. I have seen a man hungry and full of appetite, but no bread to eat, but I have seen a sight perhaps more sad, a man with food of the most luxurious kind, to whom taste seemed denied, to whom every mouthful was a thing of detestation.

The Lord has but in His judgment to smite any of us with only nervousness—that nervousness at which the strong may laugh, but which makes the weak tremble, and everything will become dark before you. He has but to affect some portion of your body, and you shall see no brightness in the sun, the very fields shall lose their verdure before you, the most happy event shall only be a source of deeper gloom, you shall look on everything through a dark glass, and see nothing but darkness and despair.

He has but to touch you with sickness, and motion may be misery, and even to lie upon a bed may be a repetition of tortures as you toss from side to side. Worse still, the Lord has but to put His finger on your brain, and you become a raving lunatic, or what may seem better, but more despicable, a driveling idiot. Oh, how little then has He to do to overturn your all, to pull down that mighty castle of your joys, and darken the windows of your hope.

You are, again, for life, for necessities, for comforts, as absolutely in the hand of God as the clay upon the wheel is in the hand of the potter. You may rebel, but your rebellion is but the writhing of a worm. You may murmur, but your murmurs cannot affect Him. You may ask your comrades to join in league with you against the Almighty God, but His purpose will stand fast, and you must submit. Bound in the iron chains of destiny, you must go the way He bids you, and you must suffer or you must rejoice at His beck and will. Tremble, oh, man, tremble before God, for never was creature in the hand of creature, as creature is in the hand of Creator.

Let me briefly remark that if this be true concerning temporals, how doubly true is it with regard to *spiritual things*. There is no Christian grace which has in it a particle of self-existence. Faith, love, courage, are all sweet flowers, but their roots are in God. There may be streams of gratitude in your

heart, but the springs thereof are in Him. Your soul may be devoted and consecrated, but the lock of your devotion will be shorn off, as was the hair of Samson, unless the eternal God preserves it.

If you and I shall endure to the end, if we shall pass through the valley of death with calmness, if we shall stand before the throne of God with confidence, if we shall enter into bliss with joy, all these things must come of God. For let Him lock up the treasury of His grace, or dry up the channel of His love, the noblest Christian that breathes, must become the vilest of reprobates, and he who has best served his God must become the most abject minion of hell. Oh, learn that you are absolutely dependent upon God. He can leave you, and where are you? He can help you, and you shall stand securely.

So is it with the sinner, he is in God's hand to save him or to destroy him. He can give him up, like Pharaoh, to hardness of heart, or He can melt his heart and bow his stubborn will. He can throw the reins upon his neck, and say, "Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols," or He can make him willing in the day of His power, create in him a new heart and a right spirit, and save him from the wrath to come. O God, You are over all and You are all. Man is nothing before You. You have Your will. You do as You please among the angels in heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world. "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

III. I come to my third and last point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THIS SUBJECT.

First, a few lessons to the *saint*, and then to the *sinner*.

To the *saint* first. Child of God, see where you are. You, even you, are completely in the hand of your God. Your life, your death, your prosperity in this world, your growth in grace, your peace, all things rest upon His sovereign will. Nothing can harm you, unless He bids it. Nothing can cheer you, unless He commands it. You rest not in your own hand. Be your will never so headstrong, be your mind never so stubborn, either you must yield cheerfully, or else you must bend unwillingly. You are absolutely, and entirely, and in every respect placed at the will and disposal of Him who is your God.

And now, child of God, let me ask you this question. Are you grieved because of this? Does this doctrine trouble you? Let God lay aside His scepter, say, are you prepared to wield it? Had you rather have followed your own will than be at God's disposal? Would you rather that He should be in everything and that He should do as He wills, or that it should be left to you?

Oh! I see you, you countless armies of God, I see you bow your knees at once, and cry, "O Lord, we bless You that it is not so, we praise You that You have left nothing to our disposal, but that You everywhere have sway." This is not the subject of groaning but of mirth and joy to us. We set up our banners with this watchword, "The LORD reigneth." We go on our journey with this as our constant cordial, "God is here." With this as our shield, we lift up our arm against calamity. With this as our sword, we rush into the thick of the battle against sin.

The LORD reigneth—"Let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." "Great God, if I could have it otherwise, I would not. If I could reverse Your decision, and if I could erase the lines of trial and write in the stead thereof the gilded lines of joy, I could not and I would not do it. If the book of my destiny were in my power today, I neither would erase a word nor insert a syllable. Be it unto me even as Thou wilt, not my will but Thine be done."

It is easy to say this, but oh, how hard to feel it when it comes to the trial hour. When darkness fills the sky, when the coffin lies in the silent chamber, and the precious one is sleeping in the arms of death, when the tide has swept away all we have, when beggary stares us in the face, when slander follows us at the back, still to say, "JEHOVAH, *Thy* tempests are better than *my* sunshine, and the storm which You have brewed is better to me than the brightest days if I had made them for myself." Take care, child of God, that you hold fast and firm this your confidence, which shall have great recompense of reward.

But mind one other thing, O heir of heaven. Let your conversation be such as becomes this doctrine. Speak of what you will do, and of what will happen, always in respect to the fact that man proposes but God disposes. When you hear your enemy vow some deadly thing against you, smile, because your enemy is not God. And when you propose to yourself something which seems to you good and pleasant, weep over your own folly if you are too confident, for you are not God.

None but God can promise so as to cheer a sensible mind. None but God can threaten so as to alarm a Christian mind. The threatenings and promises of God are true, but neither the threatenings of man nor his promises are worth the words in which they are uttered.

Oh, my dear Christian brethren, tried as some of you are in various and in arduous ways, I wish I could burn this truth into your souls. But God the Holy Spirit must do it. I pray you stand to it that there is God in everything, and I am sure as the result of it you will be driven to more constant and earnest prayer. For if there be God in everything, take everything to God. If God has done you ill, take the ill to God and He will set it right. This very season of the year suggests prayer. Prayer can reverse the winds and stay the clouds, and let the infidel world see it is so.

In the days of that eminent Scotch minister, Robert Blair, there had been for a long time a terrible rain, until at the time of harvest the wheat had grown an inch long after it had ripened. The people met together for prayer, and that day it rained more furiously than it had done before. Yet they separated in the firm belief that God had heard their prayer. Mr. Blair said to the assembly that he was sure, though God might seem as if he mocked them, yet He was a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God still.

That night the clouds were scattered and driven away, and the harvest was ingathered. Some of the wheat had been spoiled, but most of it was housed in safety. Trust your God then. Tempt Him not by murmuring, but prove Him, not as the children of Israel did, but prove Him as Malachi exhorts us, and see if He will not pour out blessings and make the earth rejoice with the harvest.

At any rate, be not as they that tremble in the day of calamity. Stand still, you children of God. You wear an armor that no weapon of man can pierce, you dwell within a city, the bulwarks of which are impregnable. Let no fear invade you. Be strong and of good courage, your God is with you. He is better than all your fears, nay, He shall exceed all your hopes. Set up your banners and shout aloud, and rejoice in Him. God is with you, and the Lord JEHOVAH reigneth.

In conclusion, my last word is to the *sinner*. You, who have not been converted, and have no part or lot in present salvation, to you I say this much: Man, man, you are in the hand of God. Whether you shall live to reach your home today or not, depends absolutely upon His will. Rich though you be, the wealth you possess can take to itself wings and fly away at His will. He can fill your body with pains so terrible that you shall long for death itself to escape from them. He can make visions flit before your eyes, both when you sleep and when you wake, that shall so scare you that you would prefer the company of the devils in hell to solitude. God can make you such a hell to your own self that you would seek either knife or poison to escape from your own thoughts. And that He can do, and you cannot escape. No wings can bear you above His dominion. No depth can hide you from His sway.

But now, what is the path of wisdom? Is it wise to curse God, in whose hands your breath is? Is it a rational thing to treat with indifference Him upon whom you depend for time and for eternity? Your own self-interest would dictate a wiser course. Dash not your head against the bosses of His buckler. Be not mad enough to run upon His glittering spear.

What does wisdom say to you if you will but listen? It cries, "Be reconciled to God." You cannot resist Him effectually, throw down your weapons and yield. And what does the Scripture say to you? It saith, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." What says the church unto you? It saith, "Christ has received us: the Bride saith come." What says Christ to you? "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Bow the knee and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little."

Oh, Spirit of God, speak to the madmen and make them sane. Speak to the men that fight against God, and bid them tremble at Him, and yield, and seek His favor. O sinner, remember what He has said, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Hear you, in conclusion, that sweet word of His, "Whosoever will, let him come. The Spirit and the Bride say come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.