

THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL

NO. 833

A SERMON
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“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”
Isaiah 55:13.

THESE words are a poetical description of great moral changes which the gospel works wherever it comes; it transforms human nature, and makes society to become as though a desert suddenly blossomed into a cultivated field. At the same time, the words of the text are not solely and alone poetical, for it is a great truth of God that wherever the *spiritual* change comes, the physical change is almost sure to follow; as men are elevated the earth yields her increase more largely; the earth was cursed for man's sake, and in proportion as man forsakes his sloth, his drunkenness, his savageness, the ground rewards his diligence with plenteous harvests. Look at the field of the sluggard, and the garden of the industrious; look over the wild wastes of Africa, and then see the fertility of the same soil when tilled by the missionary's converts. The surest way to benefit men in their *outward* circumstances is to bless them *spiritually*—for as they draw near to God in obedience to His will, He will as a rule bless and prosper them. England will always flourish while she honors the word of God; if she departs from the gospel to follow after Popery, she may expect her prosperity to decline. If we desire our land to maintain her eminent position among the nations, we must go on to do everything which is just and right towards all classes; we must break down every old abuse, and build up the good and the true. Doing this, and upholding the word of God, we may expect that this land will inherit a future brighter than the past.

The text certainly touches upon changes in the soil, yet it has mainly to do with the great *moral* world. The gospel transforms the whole state of man, so that instead of the thorn of sin comes up the fir tree of divine grace, and instead of the brier of lust comes up the myrtle tree of holiness.

I. I call your attention to THE EFFECTIVE AGENCY here spoken of, and I beg you to refer to your Bibles and read the chapter with me, for it gives a very full and minute description of the gospel.

I do not find in this 55th chapter of Isaiah that the cause of the spiritual miracles of my text is a gospel of forms and ceremonies, of altars and priests, genuflections and processions, images and incense, millinery and mystery; I find not a single word concerning any of these throughout the whole chapter! Nor do I find here a gospel of dogmas and orthodoxies, of rigid creeds and infallible statements of which it is said that he who believes them not, “shall without doubt perish everlastingly.” Instead I learn of a gospel of quite another sort, more divine, more glorious by far!

We perceive in the chapter before us a gospel *revealing divine provision for man's necessity, and earnestly inviting man to partake of it*. Look at the first verse—observe its earnest “Ho!” and note the repetition of the entreaty, “Come.” The soul has a longing, fitly described as *thirst*, and for this thirst the Lord provides abundant water, and if man thirsts for a drink more nourishing, here is milk. Or if he requires a draught more comforting and cheering, here is wine, and inasmuch as the *soul* has hunger and needs to receive spiritual food, here is provision whereof the man is bid to buy and eat. The Lord has fully provided for man's needs. The gospel of Jesus says to man, “Man, all that you can possibly need Jesus Christ has prepared for you. Do you need sin forgiven? Behold a fountain filled with blood—wash in it, and you are clean. Do you need sin conquered in you? Behold the Holy Spirit willing to dwell in you, and to subdue inbred sin. Do you desire to grow in grace, and to be made in the image of holiness? Look unto Jesus! Behold the Spirit waiting to work the image of the Son of God in you, changing you from glory to glory as by the presence of the Lord. What are the cravings of your nature? What are the deep woes and longings of your uneasy spirit? “Behold,” said Jesus, “only come to Me, and I will give you satisfaction, and that satisfaction shall lead to rest.” The gospel does not come to upbraid man, or say to him, “You ought not to have these needs” or, “You ought, by your own efforts, to supply them.” No, it says, “Poor, abject, poverty-stricken man, come to Me; God has loaded both My hands with sup-

plies for your great necessities; only come and take what God freely presents to you without money and without price." The gospel, then, which is to turn the thorn into the myrtle, is one which declares that God has made provision for the necessities of man, and which then heartily and earnestly invites man to partake thereof. I cannot understand the gospel of some ministers who never dare to say to a sinner, "Come," and are afraid to bid him repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ! I know why they are so afraid, because they believe that man is not able, of himself, to repent and believe (in which belief I fully agree with them), and therefore they will not bid men do what is beyond their power. Yet if preaching is the word of God, it should of right be something more than any and every simpleton might accomplish! Now, any fool has faith enough to tell a man to do what he knows he *can* do, but it takes a man full of faith, and sent of God to command men, in God's name, to do things far beyond human reach! When a man dares speak as God would have him, the Holy Spirit puts force into the command, and the hearer is enabled to do what he would not otherwise have attempted. The gospel which cries, "Awake, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life"—this is the power of God unto salvation! We prophesy unto the dead, and cry, "You dry bones, live!" Any man in all Israel could have said to the living bones, "Live," but only an Ezekiel could say, "You dry bones, live!" This is one of the tests of the true servants of God, that they dare to bid men do what of themselves they cannot do; that, speaking in their Master's name, they believe that the power of God, Himself, goes forth with the word of gospel command, and that God's commands are God's enabling to His elect when listening to His truth.

From the same verse it is most clear that *this gospel is as free as the air, for we read over and over again*, "Buy without money and without price," and are not those invited to come who have no money? The meaning of this must be not merely that men *cannot purchase* salvation with gold, but that they *cannot merit* it any way. gospel blessings must be received gratis; the Lord stops not to bargain and quibble with sinners; you are not to dream of *deserving* mercy; you are not to think of making yourself fit for salvation; you are to come to Jesus just as you are. If you have no good feelings, you are to come to Christ to get them; if you have no graces, or virtues, or right emotions, you may come to Jesus for all things. If you are so bad that if you were sifted, there would not be found a grain of goodness in you, yet nevertheless, he who has no money, let him come, let him come, and freely take what God provides! The gospel of Jesus is as free as the air we breathe; our lungs receive air without let or hindrance, and there is no toll or tax upon it. Divine grace is as free as the water gushing from the rock, whereof every thirsty traveler may partake; free, I say, to every man or woman born who is led by grace to long for it. "Then why do they not take it?" you ask, and the answer is, because their wills are perverse towards Christ, and it needs an act of sovereign grace to make men willing to receive Him. Yet remember if they will not receive the grace of God, the fault lies wholly with themselves; their eternal ruin is of their own procuring!

Further observe that it is a gospel of *hearing, and not of doing*. See the second verse, "Listen carefully" [NKJV]. Notice the third verse, "Incline your ear." And yet again, "*Hear* and your soul shall live." Death came to us first through the eyes, but salvation comes through the ears. Our first parent, Eve, *looked* at the fruit; she "saw that it was good," and so she plucked; and so we fell. But no man rises to eternal life by signs and symbols appealing to the *eyes*—it is by the use of the *ears* that the joyful news is communicated! The soldiers of Emanuel would gladly carry Eye-Gate by storm, but it is not to be done; Ear-Gate is a far more accessible point of attack for the gospel warrior; there we must sound the silver trumpet, and there we must keep the battering rams of the gospel continually beating, for faith comes not by *seeing*—it comes by *hearing*, and hearing by the *word of God*. Dear hearer, if you desire eternal life, you have not now to perform a dreary penance, or to pass through tormenting horrors of mind; you do not have to live for years a meritorious life; you have but to *listen* to the gospel with attention and faith; listen to it, and receive it into your soul, and that gospel will do for you what you never can do for yourself—it will change your nature! And when your nature is changed, then good works will follow as a result, but if you seek good works as a *cause* of salvation, you will make a gross mistake; but if you will take the gospel to be in you the cause and root of holiness, then all manner of good things shall spring up to your comfort, and to God's praise. The first business of a sinner is to hear the gospel. Note how it is, over and over again, "Listen." "Incline your ear." "Hear, and your soul shall live." I charge you, frequent a gospel ministry; I beseech you, search the Scriptures; be diligent in seeking to know what the gospel is, for while you are waiting at the posts of Jesus' doors, you shall hear the good word which says, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." Down with those gospels of gazing

and staring; they will damn men, but they cannot save them! The gaudy idolatries which every day are flaunted in our faces, are enough to make the martyrs start from their graves to curse their cowardly sons who tolerate such worse than fooleries. The land must surely groan at its heart to see that here again, on English soil, the pollution of crucifixes, and cross-bearings, and altars, and bald monks, and I know not what besides, multiplied in every corner! The gospel says, "Look to Jesus, and live." It does not say, "Look to crucifixes." Its message is, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." Not, "Turn your *faces*, and gaze upon a priest acting like a fool in a pantomime." The gospel heard by the heart, and believed in by the soul is the great transforming agency of which Isaiah speaks.

Furthermore, running your eyes down the chapter you will notice that the great means God makes use of for turning deserts into gardens, is the gospel founded on a covenant, a covenant made with David's Lord and Son. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." We were all lost through a covenant; God made a covenant with Adam, a covenant of *works*. It was on this wise—"This do, and you shall live; abstain from eating of the forbidden tree, and you, and those whom you represent, shall live in My favor." Adam broke the condition of the agreement, and then and there, you and I, and all of us fell down and perished by the fatal act of our first parent. The Lord has now arranged a new covenant of a different character. It is made with Christ Jesus, the Second Adam, and with all whom He represents. It is on this wise—"You, Jesus, You shall keep the law, and You shall also suffer a penalty for all the breaches of My law by all who are in You; if You do this, all those who are in You shall live eternally." At this hour this covenant can never fail us, because our Lord Jesus has fully and completely obeyed the law, and has suffered the penalty due for our guilt. The conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled, and the covenant of grace is henceforth unconditional! It consists only of promises on God's part to us, and not of legal obligations on our part to God; for Jesus Christ has fulfilled the obligations of His people towards God as far as the law of works is concerned. The everlasting and sure covenant stands on this wise: "I will bless you; I will save you; I will be your God, and you shall be My people." Now, if there had been an "if" in the covenant, turning upon something to be done by *us*, it could not have been called, as it is in the chapter, "an everlasting covenant," for it would have been quite sure to break down sooner or later. But Jesus the Lord, having kept to the utmost jot and tittle His part of the covenant of grace, and fulfilled the conditions, the eternal Father is now engaged to fulfill His portion of the covenant towards Jesus Christ and all who are represented in Him. This is the rock on which rests the blessed gospel! Wherever a covenant gospel is preached, it will work wonders, but it must always be a gospel based upon the covenant of grace, even the sure mercies of David.

Still proceeding in our investigation of the chapter, notice that Isaiah describes a gospel whose success is guaranteed. See the fifth verse, "You shall call a nation that you know not." But we may call often, and men will not come; in this case, however, they *shall* come. "Nations that knew not you, shall run unto you." And again, in the 10th and 11th verses, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The gospel of Jesus Christ is an agency adapted to produce the results which God designed; and with the accompanying Spirit of divine grace, the ordained results are always produced. It is no chance involved as to whether the preaching of the word this morning shall be useful or not; God has determined and settled its results from before the foundations of the world! What a consolation this ought to be to all of you who are serving your Lord Jesus; as far as *you* are concerned, everything depends upon your earnestness and fidelity; but as far as *God* is concerned, He has decreed and determined all results, and you may go in confidence that God shall not be disappointed, and the eternal purpose shall not be frustrated. Brothers and sisters, come what may, the gospel shall ultimately be triumphant! Even in our own land the gospel will yet, like a blast from the Lord, sweep cardinals, and priests, and monks, and all the Popish crew down Albion's white cliffs, and sink them in the sea! The day shall come when the ranks of superstition shall be broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale; the gods of the heathens, shaking even now, shall fall from their pedestals! Celestial light shall scatter the infernal darkness once and for all; only be of good heart, you soldiers of the cross; the voice of Christ shall call the nations, and rising up from their bondage, the nations shall come to Him! The eternal Father shall send His quickening power into the hearts of myriads of men, and as though it were but one man, they

shall throw their idols to the moles and to the bats, and shall turn to the Lord and live! In this is our comfort! Let this be the encouragement of every fainting laborer.

Only one other remark. The gospel which Isaiah speaks of is one which is *very full of gracious encouragement*; were there ever more inviting words written than these: "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Those 8th and 9th verses—what drops of honey they are! How they must delight the trembling sinner; yes, and when we preach Christ, we are to preach Him in this spirit. Jesus did declare the judgment of God, and warn men of hell—nobody ever spoke more solemnly than He concerning the world to come and all its woes, but still, it was all in gentleness, tenderness, and pity. Men are saved not so much by threatening them, and making them to tremble with physical fear, as by gently wooing them with Jesus' mighty love, and reminding them of the great Father's pity, and the Holy Spirit's condescension. How tenderly the Lord deals with unbelieving, faint-hearted sinners; He puts language into the Bible which is so loving as almost to make fear impossible! The Holy Spirit searches for metaphors and illustrations, if I may so say, that shall by some means calm the perturbed spirit of poor tremblers. "Look," He says, "your thoughts are very dark and despairing, and you conclude that you must be lost; but My thoughts are not as your thoughts; you know not how kind a God I am; you have no idea how ready I am to forgive the past, how willing to restore My rebel child to all that he has lost through offending Me." You slander the great Father who is in heaven; you dream of Him as a tyrant; you fancy that He bears always the sword in His hand, but know that like the father in the parable, He sees returning prodigals a great way off, and when they come towards Him, He runs to meet them! His heart yearns for them, and His tongue is ready to speak words of peace. Let us, dear brothers, whether we preach in pulpits, or preach in parlors, or preach in kitchens (and I hope we preach somewhere if we know the gospel experimentally), let us always talk encouragingly to those we meet! "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord"—what says the apostle?—"We persuade men." That is a much unexpected word, "persuade." You expected the passage to be, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we thunder at men, we threaten men." It is not so, but, "We *persuade* men." With all those terrors heavily pressing our minds, we still adopt the soft, tender, and gentle method—we tell men of the great *mercy* of God, of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, of the power there is in the atoning sacrifice to take away human guilt, of the readiness with which a sinner at hell's gate may yet be lifted up to heaven! It is the gospel of encouragement which, after all, wins the day.

We have spent enough time in noticing the efficient agency which produces the results spoken of in the text, and must now pass on to another point.

II. Secondly, observe THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL.

The change depicted in this verse is very radical. A little observation will convince you that it is a change in the soil. The verse does not say, "Instead of the thorn God shall *plant* the fir tree," no, but as the thorn coming up naturally by itself indicates such-and-such a condition of soil, so fir trees shall spring up by themselves spontaneously—indicating an altogether radical change in the earth beneath. Instead of the thorn, the fir tree shall come up, shall spring up *naturally*. The results and outgrowth of the soil are different, but it is clear from the use of the words, "shall come up," that the soil itself is different, too. I passed by a piece of common land yesterday; they had been enclosing it, as those rascals always will if they can, to rob the poor of their rights, and filch every morsel of green grass upon which we may freely put our feet. But I noticed that they had only *enclosed* it; they had not dug it up, nor plowed it, nor planted it; and though they had cut down the gorse, they were coming up again—of course they would, for they are a common bush, and a bit of fence or a rail could not alter them; and before long the enclosure would be as wild as the heath outside. It is not so in the text. When God encloses a heart that has laid common, does He cut down the thorns and the briars, and then plant fir trees? No. No! He so changes the *soil* that from the *ground itself*—from its own vitality there spontaneously starts up the fir tree, and the myrtle; this is a most wonderful result! You take a man and leave him at heart the same godless man; you mend his habits; you *make* him go to church, or to the meeting house; you clothe him; you break his wine bottles; you rinse his mouth out so that he does not talk so filthily, and after all that, you say, "He is now a respectable man." Ah, but if these respectabilities and appearances are only skin deep *outwardly*, you have done nothing! At least what you have done is no great wonder—there is nothing in it to be proud of. But suppose this man can be so changed that just as freely as he was apt to

curse, he now delights to pray? And suppose that just as heartily as he hated religion, he now finds pleasure in it? And just as earnestly as he sinned, he now delights to be obedient to the Lord? Ah, then this is a wonder! It is a miracle which man cannot accomplish! It is a marvel which only the grace of God can work, and which gives to God His highest glory!

Note the poetic metaphor which describes the outward change. Originally the *natural* heart yields *thorns*. A *thorn* is the conspicuous emblem of the curse. Upon many ungodly men there is very *evidently* the curse, while upon *all* it really rests; they toil hard, but are yet impoverished. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Drunkenness, gambling, and uncleanness always carry a curse with them; you cannot enter some men's houses without seeing on the dirty walls and the bare floor the mark of the curse; listen to them, hear them talk, and their speech betrays them; they can hardly get through a sentence without some word which indicates the curse of sin. Or, sojourn among another class of society, and you soon find the mark of the curse either in the shape of discontent, or weariness of religious exercises, or fear of death, or hatred of the gospel, or some other form. But when divine grace displays its marvelous transformation, how different is the scene! Instead of the thorn, there comes up the fir tree, a tree chosen to be used in the building of the house of God where beams of cedar and fir were abundantly to be seen! The man blesses, and magnifies now, the Most High God, and though he feels (and mourns as he feels it) some of the effects of the curse in his own corrupt nature, yet the longings of his soul are in the opposite direction, and the bent and bias of his spirit are towards the hearty and loving service of the Most High.

Observe again, the man originally brought forth a thorn—that is, a *fruitless thing*; look at it, and see how barren it is. God gets neither prayer nor praise from the ungodly man, throughout his whole life the God who made him is forgotten; he never seeks to glorify his Maker; he perhaps looks upon that as cant. His great god is his money, and if he can increase his wealth he is satisfied. O, good God, from this unconverted man You get nothing; he is a thorn, and bears no fruit! Now, as soon as he is changed by the grace of God through the hearing of the gospel, he becomes like a fir tree! The tree here described is one of the most useful growing in the East, and so the converted man becomes useful to his God, useful to his fellow man, useful to the church, useful for spiritual things, useful to eternity!

A thorn, too, is a *repulsive* thing; there is nothing inviting about it; nobody would choose to make it a pillow or a companion! An unconverted selfish man is frequently most repulsive; I say not so of all, for some people without Christ are persons naturally amiable, but many and many a man, especially when sin has come to a head within him, is a thorn-hedge, a churl, an unsympathizing selfish being. Sinners are as bad a company for true saints as thorns and briars would be for a naked man. "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men," says the Psalmist, as if he felt their company to be too irksome to be borne. But when changed, sinners become beautiful and attractive like those stately firs which delight our eyes! Happy is that man who, though he was once like a thorn, pushing aside all Christian communion, and standing in solitary rebellion by himself, has now become one of those who fear the Lord, and speaks often one to another, even as the pine trees of the forest speak often to one another in their sacred solitude when the wind sounds through their pillared shade.

Again, the thorn is a *ripping* thing—offending and noxious. Pass over it with naked feet, and what a laceration you receive! See how your garment is torn, and the beauty marred by the thorn! So has it been with ungodly men, when unrestrained by divine grace; like Saul of Tarsus, they breathe out vengeance against God and His people. Persecutors are rending and tearing thorns, but when saved of God, they are not the same men. That which they once pulled down, they now seek to build up, and they are now as earnest to extend the kingdom of Christ as once they were to blaspheme His name.

As for the metaphor of the brier used in the text, it was always the emblem of *desolation*; the brier came up on the desolate walls of Babylon and Nineveh; the brier covered the land of Israel when the inhabitants were carried away captive. In how many human hearts where the gospel has not come is there desolation, sadness, despair? They want they know not what; their cries are like the cries of the dragon, and the owl amidst the broken palaces of kings—the heart is deserted of its God, and therefore deserted of all happiness.

The brier, too, is a thing that *cumbers* the ground. It occupies the place of the palm or of the fig, and so ungodly men cumber the ground; they do no good; they occupy spheres in which others might have served God. They are altogether wasters; they rob God; they bring Him no revenue of glory.

The brier is soon *to be cut down*, and when cut down no use can be made of it; it is burnt, it is put away. Such is the future history of the unconverted man; his sin will bring him sorrow, and the halls of his soul shall be desolate. His life is a cumbering of the ground, and his end shall be to be utterly destroyed among the refuse things which God casts away. Blessed is such a one when God transforms him into the comely myrtle, nurtured, and tended, and cared for by the Lord—and made to celebrate the victory of all-conquering divine grace! All this the gospel does! It enters a man's heart, and finds him like a wild heath overgrown with thorns; it plows him through and through, and cross-plows him; sin is made a bitter thing to him. In the sight of the cross of Christ he is made to detest himself, that he should have treated divine love with such infamous and insolent ingratitude. And then, after the plowing comes the sowing! Living truth is cast into the furrow! Up it springs—first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and God is glorified where once Satan ruled and mischief alone was worked! There are many such cases of glorious transformation in this house this morning. It is our comfort to know that if we needed proofs of our ministry, or seals to the power of the gospel, here they are. Oh, how clearly can some of us testify what divine grace has done for our souls! Blessed be the name of our God, it was not priestcraft that saved us, but we heard the good news that Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s, and it exactly suited our case! We came to Jesus just as we were, and we cast ourselves on Him, and now, being saved, our great concern is to show forth His praise who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

III. Our last exercise is to notice THE GLORIOUS ISSUE. “It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Jehovah might if He willed, have taken other names; He might have selected other works of His hands to be the ensigns of His glory, but He has chosen the results of the gospel to be His proudest honors! He has, if I may use such a term, staked His eternal majesty upon the effects of gospel of grace! With the heathen, *their* gods took names from what were thought to be their most glorious works. We read of Jove, the thunderer, because they imagined that he launched the bolt from his hand. They spoke of the far-darting Apollo, the rays of light flashing from the sun. They talked of the cruel Juno in the wars of Troy; each god and goddess was allotted some particular name as indicating its individuality. If Jehovah, the one and only true God, had chosen, He might have been “Jehovah, the Thunderer.” We might have read of the far-darting God; we might have had Him constantly portrayed in Scripture as the terrible and avenging Lord, but He has not chosen such a name. He has not been pleased to select anything that is terrible as His peculiar glory, but that which is full of melting *mercy* and tender *pity*! The gospel of mercy to guilty sinners, the gospel of abounding mercy for abounding sin shall be His name; the gospel of hearing and living; the gospel of inclining the ear and being saved! Now, observe that the Lord was by no means necessitated to choose this to be His distinguishing sign, escutcheon, and glory. See what His arm has done in days gone by—where He made the heavens and the earth, and stretched out the firmament, and filled the channels of the great deep; might not He have said, “These shall be unto Me for a name” when He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast? Or if the things of earth were too insignificant, lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created all *these* things! Those ponderous orbs which move in majesty—has not He made them all? If He had willed it, as He made those stars whose distance and magnitude are utterly inconceivable by us, might not He have said, “These shall be unto the Lord for a name”? We are told by astronomers, and we do not doubt it, that the whole of the fixed stars visible by the telescope may be possibly nothing more than a little group somewhere in an obscure corner of the universe occupying a space perfectly inconceivable for immensity! They may yet be as the small dust of the balance compared with the whole of God's works. If it is so, and God has made worlds without number filled with countless inhabitants, all of which sound forth His praise, He might have said, “This creation which I have finished shall be to Me for a name.” But it is not so; the Lord has not chosen *Creation* to be His distinguishing glory! Beloved, there is the world of providence, and in that providence there are wheels within wheels evolving marvels of manifold wisdom; surely these might have been to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, but it is not so declared. Those mighty acts which we read of in sacred story—surely these might have been unto God for a name! When He laid bare His arm, and crushed the pride of Pharaoh, do you Hear Miriam's timbrel? Can you not, even now, catch the exulting strains of Israel's song, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea”? Surely, this might be to Jehovah for a name, but it is not so recorded! The leading of His people through the wilderness, when He fed them

with manna dropping like dew from heaven; or the destruction of the inhabitants of Palestine, when He made the heathen kings to flee before the Israelites; or the overthrow of Sennacherib; or those 10,000 mighty wonders worked by Him, whose mercy endures forever—surely these might have been called His name, but it is not so!

Turn your thoughts, for a moment, from that which we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and think of another world. There is a land of spirits, where weeping rules the day. No, let me amend my speech—where lamentation rules the night, unbroken by glimpse of light! There lay the enemies of God, defeated and bound in chains; deep in the awful dungeons lie the princes and kings who said of the royal Son, “Let us break His bands asunder.” Behold the boasters! They are abject slaves in the lowest hell! There lie the cruel persecutors of the church—wicked popes, proud cardinals, lascivious monks, and lying priests—what a heap of fuel for the fire! There, too, are the nations that forgot God, and the myriads who hated and despised Him. See how Jehovah has conquered! See how all His enemies are overthrown! See how His foot falls heavily upon them all, crushing them eternally! How terribly He tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver! An Alexander or a Napoleon might carve their names in conquest, and write up their glory in crimson lines of blood; and shall not the awful Jehovah who will by no means spare the guilty; shall He not make this to Himself to be a name? Not so, says the text, not so! MERCY is His name! PARDON is His glory! FORGIVENESS of men is His everlasting sign! Brothers and sisters, observe that there is nothing material which God takes to be His glory, because although He made materialism, it is far beneath Him, and not to be gloried in. God is a *Spirit*, and His highest glory must always come from the *spiritual* world. To find Rome built of brick, and leave it built of marble is a fit triumph for mortal man—but there is nothing in the loftiest material work worthy of an immortal spirit! What is the difference between stone and marble, after all? Both shall pass away, and when the desolating wave rolls up, marble and brick shall alike be overthrown by its shock. God has made fairer things than these, and worked mightier miracles than all the pomp of kings can imagine, or the skill of art can execute! And He delights not in material things; His name rises from a *spiritual* conquest—the gospel reigning in men's hearts! Observe further, that out of spiritual things God has selected as His special fame a very peculiar case. He has not made unfallen spirits to be to Him for a name; there are probably many orders of beings who were never tempted; they are unconscious of anything like evil; they are always holy, they cannot be otherwise than pure. And while these spotless beings honor and glorify God, He has not selected *them* to be to Him for a name; pure, untried, untempted virtue is fair, but there is something yet nobler! There are angels that have been tempted but did *not* fall—these are the elect angels, who when Satan fell, preserved their integrity—faithful among the faithless. They did well not to sin; they did better than Adam, who did sin, and yet these ever-faithful servants are not called a name unto God or an everlasting sign!

But see, He has selected creatures who know good and evil, and know them both by experience, and he has selected these fallen and defiled beings! He has entered into the arena of their hearts, and in them He has fought foot to foot the battle of love against moral evil! And His love has conquered! And therefore to have won that creature once so enslaved to evil; to have overcome sin by the power of His love; to have brought His creature back by His grace to perfection, He reckons a greater honor than even to have upheld an angel or made a world! The Lord has given evil a great opportunity. He has thrown down the gage of battle to it, and said, “Do your worst.” He has allowed it to entrench itself in the very *nature* of man; He has allowed man to be a prey to the machinations of Satan, and a slave to his own lusts, and yet He has delivered him, and brought him to His feet! The Lord has ceded to the hosts of evil for ages, all the wisdom of the world—its riches, its pomp, and greatness; and He has put down in the world a humble man—despised, rejected and nailed to the cross. And He has sent out, as followers of that man, feeble men with no weapons but their tongues and their hearts, and no power except the force of the truth of God, and the aid of the Holy Spirit. And yet the Lord has overthrown Satan, utterly worsted and destroyed him! And the archangel of truth has put His foot upon his neck. Moral evil has been defeated by the love of God! In the hearts of tens of thousands of men who believe in Jesus, evil has had the fullest sway, but it has been dethroned; it has been cast from its royalty; its hands have been bound; it has been lashed to the chariot wheels of Christ, and He has led its captivity captive. Now, THIS is what is, “unto God for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

The Lord has acted wisely, as He always does, in selecting such a matter as this to be His name—to be a display of Himself, because it is *everlasting*. God might have made materialism everlasting if He

had chosen to do so, but He has not done it. It follows then, if this world had been God's name, since it will be destroyed and burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Lord would have been dishonored. If the sun, moon, and stars had been the grandest illustrations of Deity—since they all shall pass away, where then, were the glory of God? The sun shall grow dim with age, and the whole universe shall shrivel up like a scroll that is burnt in the flame, but God has selected *immortal men who cannot die!* And in these He has worked a work which they never can forget; a work which has plunged them under solemn obligations to Him which they never can discharge. He has bound them to Himself by grateful ties of affection which nothing can dissolve! He has plucked us out of the horrible pit of hell and put us into such a place that throughout eternity it shall be our delight, our very *life*, to praise and magnify His name! Oh, how will we tell angels what He has done! How will we show forth in every street to the sacred inhabitants, what divine grace has done for us, and how the love of God accomplished a mighty triumph over our sins? We will tell the cherubim and seraphim what God has done, and make them think they never saw God before till they beheld Him working in *men!* Long down the ages, when the morning star is laid asleep, we will tell our fellow immortals of Golgotha, of Calvary, of Jesus, and His love! We will repeat the story of the cross! We will publish abroad the story of the God who loved and died and of the triumph of the pierced and Crucified One when He entered the doors of our hearts, and captured us by the force of His love! This then, will be an everlasting sign unto the Lord our God!

Let this encourage Christians. If it is God's glory to save man, expect to have them saved, and go to work to save them! Get to your knees this afternoon, with great courage and confidence; go out with tracts, my good brothers and sisters, expecting God to bless you! Preach in the streets, young men; engage in all sorts of holy work, my brothers and sisters, for your labor is not in vain in the Lord! A man always likes to do what will honor himself; God also delights in that which will glorify Him—expect Him then, to save sinners!

To you who are unconverted, this last word. How this ought to encourage you to come to God in Christ Jesus! Is it to His glory to save you? Oh, then He will do it! There is nothing in *you* that could be a motive for grace—you do not deserve His pity. But then the greater your present sin is, the more the mercy of God will be seen in pardoning you! Come, then with your sin! If you are the biggest sinner who ever lived, then God's mercy will be better seen in you than in any before. So come now, even now! Come to Jesus as you are, and let the infinitude of His mercy cover the vast extent of your sin.

As for you who have been saved, let the text encourage you to tell it to others; do not be backward to profess your faith; if it glorifies God, you owe Him so much that you must not rob Him of His praise, but be bold at once to come forward and tell what God has done to your soul! May His blessing rest upon you, for His love's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 55.

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