

“THE THRONE OF GRACE”

NO. 1024

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The throne of grace.”
Hebrews 4:16.*

THESE words are found embedded in that gracious verse, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” They are a gem in a golden setting; true prayer is an approach of the soul by the Spirit of God to the throne of God; it is not the utterance of *words*. It is not alone the *feeling* of desires; it is the *advance* of the desires to God, the spiritual approach of our nature towards the Lord our God. True prayer is not a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance, but it is far deeper than that—it is *spiritual* commerce with the Creator of heaven and earth. God is a Spirit unseen of mortal eyes, and only to be perceived by the inner man, our spirit within us, begotten by the Holy Spirit at our regeneration, discerns the Great Spirit, communes with Him, gives to Him its requests, and receives from Him answers of peace. It is a spiritual business from beginning to end; its aim and objective end not with man, but reach to God Himself. In order to such prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit is needed; if prayer were of the lips alone, we would only need breath in our nostrils to pray; if prayer were of desires alone, many excellent desires are easily felt, even by natural men; but when it is the *spiritual* desire, and the *spiritual* fellowship of the human spirit with the Great Spirit, then the Holy Spirit must be present through it all! He must give it His life and power, or else true prayer will never be presented; the thing offered to God will wear the name and have the form, but the inner life of prayer will be far from it.

Moreover, it is clear from the connection of our text, that the interposition of the Lord Jesus Christ is essential to acceptable prayer; as prayer will not be truly prayer without the Spirit of God, so it will not be *prevailing* prayer without the Son of God! He, the great High Priest, must go within the veil for us; no, through His crucified person the veil must be entirely taken away! Until then, we are shut out from the living God. The man or woman who, despite the teaching of Scripture, tries to pray without a Savior insults the Deity, and he who imagines that his own natural desires, coming up before God unsprinkled with the precious blood will be an acceptable sacrifice before God, makes a mistake! He has not brought an offering that God can accept any more than if he had struck off a dog’s neck, or offered an unclean sacrifice. Worked in us by the Spirit, presented for us by the Christ of God, prayer becomes power before the Most High, but by no other way.

In order, dear friends, that I may stir you up to prayer this morning, and that your souls may be led to come near to the throne of grace, I purpose to take these few words and handle them as God shall give me ability. You have begun to pray; God has begun to answer; this week has been a very memorable one in the history of this church. Larger numbers than ever before at one time have come forward to confess Christ—as plain an answer to the supplications of God’s people as though the hand of the Most High had been seen stretched out of heaven handing down to us the blessings for which we asked! Now, let us continue in prayer, yes, let us gather strength in intercession, and the more we succeed, the more earnest let us be to succeed yet more and more! Let us not be straitened in our own hearts since we are not straitened in our God. This is a good day, and a time of glad tidings; and seeing that we have the King’s ear, I am most anxious that we should speak to Him for thousands of others, that they also, in answer to our pleadings, may be brought near to Christ. In trying to explore the text this morning, I shall take it thus: first, *here is a throne*; then, secondly, *here is grace*; then we will put the two together, and we shall see grace on a throne; and putting them together in another order, we shall see *sovereignty manifesting itself, and resplendent in grace*.

I. Our text speaks of A THRONE—“The throne of grace.” God is to be viewed in prayer as our Father; that is the aspect which is dearest to us, but we are not to regard Him as though He were such as we are, for our Savior has qualified the expression, “Our Father,” with the words, “who are in heaven.” And close at the heels of that condescending name, in order to remind us that our Father is still infinitely greater than ourselves, He has bid us say, “Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come,” so that our Father is still to be regarded as a King. And in prayer we come not only to our Father’s feet, but we come also to the throne of the great Monarch of the universe! The mercy seat is a throne, and we must not forget this; if prayer should always be regarded by us as an entrance into the courts of the royalty of heaven; if we are to behave ourselves as courtiers should in the presence of an illustrious majesty, then we are not at a loss to know the right spirit in which to pray. If in prayer we come to a throne, it is clear that our spirit should, in the first place, be one of *lowly reverence*; it is expected that the subject in approaching to the King should show forth homage and honor. The pride that will not acknowledge the King, the treason which rebels against the sovereign will should, if it is wise, avoid any near approach to the throne. Let pride bite the curb at a distance; let treason lurk in corners, for only lowly reverence may come before the King when he sits clothed in his robes of majesty. In our case, the King before whom we come is the highest of all monarchs, the King of kings, the Lord of lords! Emperors are but the shadows of His imperial power; they call themselves kings by divine right, but what divine right have they? Common sense laughs their pretensions to scorn!

The Lord alone has divine right, and to Him only does the kingdom belong! He is the blessed and only Potentate. They are but nominal kings, to be set up, and put down at the will of men, or the decree of providence, but He is Lord alone, the Prince of the kings of the earth—

*“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

My heart, be sure that you prostrate yourself in such a presence; if He is so great, place your mouth in the dust before Him, for He is the most powerful of all kings! His throne has sway in all worlds! Heaven obeys Him cheerfully; hell trembles at His frown; and earth is compelled to yield Him homage willingly or unwillingly. His power can make or can destroy! To create or to crush—either is easy enough to Him! My soul, be sure that when you draw near to the Omnipotent, who is as a consuming fire, you take your shoes off, and worship Him with lowliest humility. Besides, He is the most holy of all kings; His throne is the great white throne, unspotted, and clear as crystal. “The heavens are not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly”; and you, a sinful creature, with what lowliness should you draw near to Him? Familiarity there may be, but let it not be unhallowed; boldness there should be, but let it not be impertinent. And remember you are on earth, and He in heaven; you are still a worm of the dust, a creature crushed before the moth, and He The Everlasting; before the mountains were brought forth He was God, and if all created things should pass away again, yet still were He the same! My brothers and sisters, I am afraid we do not bow as we should before the eternal Majesty; but from now on, let us ask the Spirit of God to put us in a right frame of mind, that every one of our prayers may be a reverential approach to the infinite Majesty above.

A throne, and therefore in the second place, to be approached with *devout joyfulness*; if I find myself favored by divine grace to stand among those favored ones who frequent His courts, shall I not feel glad? I might have been in His prison, but I am before His throne; I might have been driven from His presence forever, but I am permitted to come near to Him, even into His royal palace, into His secret chamber of gracious audience; shall I not be thankful? Shall not my thankfulness ascend into joy, and shall I not feel that I am so honored that I am made the recipient of great favors when I am permitted to pray? Why is your countenance sad, O suppliant, when you stand before the throne of grace? If you were before the throne of justice to be condemned for your iniquities, your hands might well be on your loins; but now you are favored to come before the king in His silken robes of love—let your face shine with sacred delight! If your sorrows are heavy, tell Him, for He can relieve them; if your sins are multiplied, confess them, for He can forgive them! O you courtiers in the halls of such a monarch, be exceedingly glad, and mingle praises with your prayers!

It is a throne, and therefore, in the third place, whenever it is approached it should be with *complete submission*. We do not pray to God to instruct Him as to what He ought to do; neither for a moment

must we presume to dictate the line of the divine procedure. We are permitted to say to God, “Thus and thus would we have it,” but we must evermore add, “But, seeing that we are ignorant and may be mistaken; seeing that we are still in the flesh, and therefore may be actuated by carnal motives; not as we will, but as You will.” Who shall dictate to the throne? No loyal child of God will for a moment imagine that he is to occupy the place of the King! He bows before Him who has a right to be Lord of all, and though he utters his desire earnestly, vehemently, importunately, and pleads and pleads again, yet it is evermore with this necessary reservation—“Your will be done, my Lord; and if I ask anything that is not in accordance with Your will, my inmost desire is that You would be good enough to deny Your servant. I will take it as a true answer if You refuse me, if I ask that which seems not good in Your sight.” If we constantly remembered this, I think we would be less inclined to push certain pleas before the throne, for we would feel, “I am here in seeking my own ease, my own comfort, my own advantage, and perhaps I may be asking for that which would dishonor God; therefore will I speak with the deepest submission to the divine decrees.”

But, brethren, in the fourth place, if it is a throne, it ought to be approached with enlarged expectations. Well does our hymn put it—

*“You are coming to a King—
Large petitions with you bring.”*

We do not come, as it were, in prayer only to God’s treasury where He dispenses His favors to the poor; nor do we come to the back door of the house of mercy to receive the broken scraps though that is more than we deserve; to eat the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table is more than we could claim. But when we pray, we are standing in the palace, on the glittering floor of the great King’s own reception hall, and thus we are placed upon a vantage ground! In prayer we stand where angels bow with veiled faces; there, even there, the cherubim and seraphim adore before that same throne to which our prayers ascend! And shall we come there with stunted requests, and narrow and contracted faith? No, it becomes not a King to be giving away pence and goats—He distributes pieces of broad gold; He scatters not as poor men must, scraps of bread and broken meat, but He makes a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined! When Alexander’s soldier was told to ask what he would, he did not ask for little after the nature of his own merits, but he made such a heavy demand that the royal treasurer refused to pay it, and put the case to Alexander; and Alexander in right kingly sort replied, “He knows how great Alexander is, and he has asked as from a king; let him have what he requests.” Take heed of imagining that God’s thoughts are as your thoughts, and His ways as your ways! Do not bring before God stunted petitions and narrow desires, and say, “Lord, do according to these,” but remember, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts. Ask, therefore, after a God-like sort—ask for great things, for you are before a great throne. Oh that we always felt this when we came before the throne of grace, for then He would do for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think.

And beloved, I may add in the fifth place that the right spirit in which to approach the throne of grace is that of *unstaggering confidence*. Who shall doubt the King? Who dares impugn the Imperial Word? It was well said that if integrity were banished from the hearts of all mankind, it ought still to dwell in the hearts of kings; shame on a king if he can lie! The poorest beggar in the streets is dishonored by a broken promise, but what shall we say of a king if his word cannot be depended upon? Oh shame upon us, if we are unbelieving before the throne of the King of heaven and earth! With our God before us in all His glory, sitting on the throne of grace, will our hearts dare to say we mistrust Him? Shall we imagine either that He cannot, or will not keep His promise? Banished be such blasphemous thoughts, and if they must come, let them come upon us when we are somewhere in the outskirts of His dominions, if such a place there is, but not in *prayer* when we are in His immediate presence, and behold Him in all the glory of His throne of grace! Surely *there* is the place for the child to trust its Father, for the loyal subject to trust his Monarch; and therefore far from it be all wavering or suspicion! Unstaggering faith should be predominant before the mercy seat!

Only one other remark upon this point and that is if prayer is coming before the throne of God, it ought always to be conducted with the *deepest sincerity*, and in the spirit which makes everything real. If you are disloyal enough to despise the King, at least for your own sake do not mock Him to His face,

and when He is upon His throne, if you dare repeat holy words anywhere without heart, let it not be in Jehovah’s Palace! If a person should ask for audience with royalty, and then should say, “I scarcely know why I have come; I do not know that I have anything very particular to ask; I have no very urgent suit to press”—would he not be guilty both of folly and baseness? As for our great King, when we venture into His presence, let us have an errand there. As I said the other Sunday, let us beware of *playing* at praying; it is insolence towards God! If I am called upon to pray in public, I must not dare to use words that are intended to please the ears of my fellow worshippers, but I must realize that I am speaking to God, and that I have business to transact with the great Lord. And in my private prayer, if, when I rise from my bed in the morning I bow my knees and repeat certain words; or when I retire to rest at night and go through the same regular form, I rather sin than do anything that is good unless my very soul does speak to the Most High. Do you think that the King of heaven is delighted to hear you pronounce words with a frivolous tongue and a thoughtless mind? You know Him not! He is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth! If you have any empty forms to prate, go and pour them out into the ears of fools like you, but not before the Lord of hosts!

If you have certain words to utter to which you attach a superstitious reverence, go and say them in the gaudy courts of the harlot, Rome, but not before the glorious Lord of Zion! The spiritual God seeks spiritual worshippers, and such He will accept, and only such! But the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, and only a sincere prayer is His delight. Beloved, the gathering up of all our remarks is just this—prayer is no trifle; it is an eminent and elevated act; it is a high and wondrous privilege. Under the old Persian Empire a few of the nobility were permitted at any time to come in unto the king, and this was thought to be the highest privilege possessed by mortals. You and I, the people of God, have a permit, a passport to come before the throne of heaven at any time we will, and we are encouraged to come there with great boldness! But let us not forget that it is no mean thing to be a courtier in the courts of heaven and earth—to worship Him who made us, and sustains us in being. Truly, when we attempt to pray, we may hear the voice saying, out of the excellent glory, “Bow the knee.” From all the spirits that behold the face of our Father who is in heaven, even now I hear a voice which says, “Oh, come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before Him all the earth!”

II. Lest the glow and brilliance of the word “throne” should be too much for mortal vision, our text now presents us with the soft, gentle radiance of that delightful word—“GRACE.” We are called to the throne of *grace*, not to the throne of law. Rocky Sinai once was the throne of law, when God came to Paran with 10,000 of His holy ones. Who desired to draw near to *that* throne? Even Israel might not. Boundaries were set about the mount, and if but a beast touched the mount, it was stoned or thrust through with a dart! O you self-righteous ones who hope that you can obey the law, and think that you can be saved by it, look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair! To that throne we do not come now, for through Jesus the case is changed; to a conscience purged by the precious blood there is no anger upon the divine throne; though to our troubled minds—

*“Once it was a seat of burning wrath,
And shot devouring flames.
Our God appeared a consuming fire,
And jealous was His name.”*

And, blessed be God, we are not this morning to speak of the throne of ultimate justice. Before that we shall *all* come, and as many of us as have believed will find it to be a throne of grace as well as of justice, for, He who sits upon *that* throne shall pronounce no sentence of condemnation against the man who is justified by faith!

But I have not to call you this morning to the place from where the resurrection trumpet shall ring out so shrill and clear; not yet do we see the angels with their vengeful swords come forth to smite the foes of God; not yet are the great doors of the pit of hell opened to swallow up the enemies who would not have the Son of God to reign over them. We are still on praying ground, and pleading terms with God, and the throne to which we are bid to come, and of which we speak at this time is the throne of grace! It is a throne set up on purpose for the dispensation of grace; a throne from which every utterance

is an utterance of grace. The scepter that is stretched out from it is the silver scepter of grace; the decrees proclaimed from it are purposes of grace; the gifts that are scattered down its golden steps are gifts of grace, and He who sits upon the throne is grace itself! It is the throne of grace to which we approach when we pray, and let us for a moment or two think this over, by way of consolatory encouragement to those who are beginning to pray. Indeed, to all of us who are praying men and women, if in prayer I come before the throne of grace, then *the faults of my prayers will be overlooked*. In the beginning of your praying, dear friend, you feel as if you do not pray; the groanings of your spirit, when you rise from your knees, are such that you think there is nothing in them; what a blotted, blurred, smeared prayer it is! Never mind, you have not come to the throne of justice, else when God perceived the fault in the prayer He would spurn it; your broken words, your gasps, and stammering are before a *throne of grace!*

When any one of us has presented his best prayer before God, if we saw it as God sees it, there is no doubt we would have great lamentation over it, for there is enough sin in the *best* prayer that was ever prayed to secure its being cast away from God! But it is not a throne of justice, I say again, and here is the hope for our lame, limping supplications. Our condescending King does not maintain a stately etiquette in His court like that which has been observed by princes among men, where a little mistake or a flaw would secure the petitioner's being dismissed with disgrace. Oh, no! The faulty cries of His children are not severely criticized by Him; the Lord High Chamberlain of the palace above, our Lord Jesus Christ takes care to alter and amend every prayer before He presents it; He makes the prayer *perfect* with *His* perfection, and prevalent with His own merits. God looks upon the prayer as presented through Christ, and forgives all its own inherent faultiness. How this ought to encourage any of us who feel ourselves to be feeble, wandering, and unskillful in prayer! If you cannot plead with God as sometimes you did in years gone by; if you feel as if somehow or other you have grown rusty in the work of supplication, never give up, but come still, yes, and come *more often*, for it is not a throne of severe criticism, it is a throne of grace to which you come! Then, further, inasmuch as it is a throne of grace, *the faults of the petitioner himself shall not prevent the success of his prayer*. Oh, what faults there are in us! To come before the throne of God—how unfit we are! We who are all defiled with sin within and without; dare any of us think of praying, were it not that God's throne is a throne of grace? If you could, I confess I could not. An absolute God, infinitely holy and just, could not in consistency with His divine nature answer any prayer from such a sinner as I am, were it not that He has arranged a plan by which my prayer comes up no longer to a throne of absolute justice, but to a throne which is also the mercy seat—the propitiation—the place where God meets sinners through Jesus Christ! Ah, I could not say to you, “Pray,” not even to you saints, unless it were a throne of grace!

Much less could I talk of prayer to you sinners, but now I will say this to every sinner here, though he should think himself to be the worst sinner that ever lived—cry unto the Lord and seek Him while He may be found! A throne of grace is a place fitted for you; go to your knees! By simple faith go to your Savior, for He, He it is who *is* the throne of grace! It is in Him that God is able to dispense grace unto the guiltiest of mankind. Blessed be God, neither the faults of the prayer, nor yet of the suppliant shall shut out our petitions from the God who delights in broken and contrite hearts! If it is a throne of grace, then *the desires of the pleader will be interpreted*. If I cannot find words in which to utter my desires, God in His grace will read my desires without the words; He takes the meaning of His saints, the meaning of their groans. A throne that was not gracious would not trouble itself to make out our petitions, but God, the infinitely gracious one, will dive into the soul of our desires, and He will read there what we cannot speak with the tongue. Have you ever seen a mother, when her child is trying to say something, and she knows very well what it is the little one has got to say, help him over the words, and utter the syllables for him? And if the little one has half-forgotten what he would say, you have seen the mother suggest the word—and so the ever-blessed Spirit, from the throne of grace, will help us, and teach us words, no, *write in our hearts* the desires themselves! We have in Scripture instances where God puts words into sinners' mouths. “Take with you words, and say unto him, ‘Receive us graciously and love us freely,’” He says. He will put the desires, and put the expression of those desires into your spirit by His grace; He will direct your desires to the things which you ought to seek; He will teach you your needs, though as yet you know them not; He will suggest to you His promises that you may be able to plead them; He will, in fact, be Alpha and Omega to your prayers, just as He is to your salvation, for as

salvation is from first to last of grace, so the sinner’s approach to the throne of grace is of grace from first to last!

What comfort this is! Will we not, my dear friends, with greater boldness draw near to this throne, as we suck out the sweet meaning of this precious Word of God, “The throne of grace”? If it is a throne of grace, then *all the needs of those who come to it will be supplied*. The King from off such a throne will not say, “You must bring to Me gifts; you must offer to Me sacrifices.” It is not a throne for receiving tribute; it is a throne for dispensing gifts! Come, then, you who are poor as poverty itself! Come, you who have no merits, and are destitute of virtues! Come, you who are reduced to a beggarly bankruptcy by Adam’s fall and by your own transgressions! This is not the throne of majesty which supports itself by the taxation of its subjects, but a throne which glorifies itself by streaming forth like a fountain with floods of good things! Come, now, and receive the wine and milk which are freely given, yes, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price. All the petitioner’s needs shall be supplied, because it is a throne of grace; and so *all the petitioner’s miseries shall be compassionated!* Suppose I come to the throne of grace with the burden of my sins? There is One on the throne who felt the burden of sin in ages long gone by, and has not forgotten its weight. Suppose I come loaded with sorrow? There is One there who knows all the sorrows to which humanity can be subjected. Am I depressed and distressed? Do I fear that God Himself has forsaken me? There is One upon the throne who said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is a throne from which grace delights to look upon the miseries of mankind with tender eyes, to consider them, and to relieve them. Come, then! Come, then! Come, then, you who are not only poor, but wretched; you whose miseries make you long for death, and yet dread it. You captive ones, come in your chains! You slaves, come with the irons upon your souls! You who sit in darkness, come forth all blindfolded as you are; the throne of grace will look on you if you cannot look on it, and will give to you though you have nothing to give in return—and will deliver you, though you cannot raise a finger to deliver yourself!

“The throne of grace.” The word grows as I turn it over in my mind, and to me it is a most delightful reflection that if I come to the throne of God in prayer, I may feel a thousand defects, but yet there is hope. I usually feel more dissatisfied with my prayers than with anything else I do; I do not believe that it is an easy thing to pray in public so as to conduct the devotions of a large congregation aright; we sometimes hear persons commended for preaching well, but if any shall be enabled to *pray* well, there will be an equal gift, and a higher grace in it. But, brothers and sisters suppose in our prayers there should be defects of knowledge? It is a throne of grace, and our Father knows that we have need of these things. Suppose there should be defects of faith? He sees our little faith, and still does not reject it, small as it is. He does not in every case measure out His gifts by the degree of our faith, but by the sincerity and trueness of faith. And if there should be grave defects even in our spirit, and failures in the fervency, or in the humility of the prayer, still, though these should not lie there, and are much to be deplored, grace overlooks all this; it forgives all this, and still its merciful hand is stretched out to enrich us according to our needs. Surely this ought to induce many to pray who have not prayed, and should make us who have been long accustomed to use the consecrated art of prayer to draw near with greater boldness than ever to the throne of grace!

III. But now regarding our text as a whole, it conveys to us the idea of GRACE ENTHRONED. It is a throne, and who sits on it? It is grace personified that is here installed in dignity, and truly, today grace is on a throne. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, grace is the most predominant attribute of God. How comes it to be so exalted? We reply grace has a throne *by conquest*; grace came down to earth in the form of the Well-Beloved, and it met with sin. Long and sharp was the struggle, and grace appeared to be trampled under foot of sin, but grace at last seized sin, threw it on its own shoulders, and though all but crushed beneath the burden, grace carried sin up to the cross, and nailed it there, slew it there, put it to death forever and triumphed gloriously! For this cause at this hour grace sits on a throne because it has conquered human sin, has borne the penalty of human guilt, and overthrown all its enemies. Grace, moreover, sits on the throne because it has established itself there *by right*. There is no injustice in the grace of God; God is as just when He forgives a believer, as when He casts a sinner into hell. I believe in my own soul that there is as much, and as pure a justice in the acceptance of a soul that believes in Christ, as there will be in the rejection of those souls who die impenitent, and are banished from Jeho-

vah’s presence. The sacrifice of Christ has enabled God to be just and yet the justifier of him who believes. He who knows the word, “substitution,” and can spell its meaning aright, will see that there is nothing due to justice from any believer; Jesus Christ has paid all the believer’s debts, and God would be unjust if He did not save those for whom Christ vicariously suffered, for whom His righteousness was provided, and to whom it is imputed. Grace is on the throne by conquest, and sits there by right. Grace is enthroned this day, brothers and sisters, because Christ has finished His work, and gone into the heavens. It is enthroned *in power*. When we speak of its throne, we mean that it has unlimited might; grace sits not on the footstool of God; grace stands not in the courts of God, but it *sits* on the throne! It is the reigning attribute; it is the King today. This is the dispensation of grace, the year of grace—grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. We live in the era of reigning grace, for seeing He ever lives to make intercession for the sons of men, Jesus is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him.

Sinner, if you were to meet grace in the by-way, like a traveler on his journey, I would bid you make its acquaintance, and ask its influence; if you should meet grace as a merchant on the Exchange, with treasure in its hand, I would bid you court its friendship, for it will enrich you in the hour of poverty; if you should see grace as one of the peers of heaven, highly exalted, I would bid you seek to get its ear. But, oh, when grace sits on the throne, I beseech you close in with it at once! It can be no higher; it can be no greater, for it is written “God is love,” which is an alias for grace! Oh come and bow before it! Come and adore the infinite mercy and grace of God! Doubt not, halt not, hesitate not; grace is reigning! Grace is God! God is love! Oh that you, seeing grace is thus enthroned, would come and receive it! I say, then, that grace is enthroned by conquest, by right, and by power, and I will add, it is enthroned in glory, for God glorifies His grace. It is one of His objectives now to make His grace illustrious; He delights to pardon penitents, and so to show His pardoning grace; He delights to look upon wanderers and restore them, to show His reclaiming grace; He delights to look upon the broken-hearted and comfort them, that He may show His consoling grace. There is grace to be had of various kinds, or rather the same grace acting in different ways, and God delights to make His grace glorious. There is a rainbow round about the throne like unto an emerald, the emerald of His compassion and His love. O happy souls that can believe this, and believing it can come at once and glorify grace by becoming instances of its power!

IV. Lastly, our text, if rightly read, has in it SOVEREIGNTY RESPLENDENT IN GLORY—THE GLORY OF GRACE. The mercy seat is a throne, though grace is there, it is still a throne; grace does not displace sovereignty. Now the attribute of sovereignty is very high and terrible—its light is like a jasper stone, most precious, and like a sapphire stone, or, as Ezekiel calls it, “The terrible crystal.” Thus says the King, the Lord of hosts, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “Who are you, O man that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him who formed it, ‘Why have You made me thus?’” “Has not the potter power over the clay to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” These are great and terrible words, and are not to be answered. He is a King, and He will do as He wills; none shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” But, ah, lest any of you should be downcast by the thought of His sovereignty, I invite you to the text. It is a throne—there is sovereignty. But to every soul that knows how to pray, to every soul that by faith comes to Jesus, the true mercy seat, divine sovereignty wears no dark and terrible aspect, but is full of love! It is a throne of grace from which I gather that the sovereignty of God to a believer, to a pleader, to one who comes to God in Christ, is always exercised in pure grace. To you, to you who come to God in prayer, the sovereignty always runs thus—“I will have mercy on that sinner though he deserves it not, though in him there is no merit; yet because I can do as I will with My own, I will bless him; I will make him My child; I will accept him. He shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels.” On the mercy seat, God never executed sovereignty otherwise than in a way of grace! He reigns, but in this case grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are these two or three things to be thought of, and I have done. On the throne of grace sovereignty has placed itself under bonds of love. I must speak with words choice and picked here, and I must hesitate and pause to get right sentences, lest I err while endeavoring to speak the truth in plainness. God

will do as He wills, but on the mercy seat He is under bonds; bonds of His own making, for He has entered into covenant with Christ, and so into covenant with His chosen. Though God is and always must be a sovereign, He never will break His covenant, nor alter the word that is gone out of His mouth. He cannot be false to a covenant of His own making. When I come to God in Christ, to God on the mercy seat, I need not imagine that by any act of sovereignty God will set aside His covenant. That cannot be—it is impossible. Moreover, on the throne of grace, God is again bound to us by His promises. The covenant contains in it many gracious promises, exceedingly great and precious. “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Until God had said that word or a word to that effect, it was at His own option to hear prayer or not, but it is not so now. For now, if it is true prayer offered through Jesus Christ, His truth binds Him to hear it! A man may be perfectly free, but the moment he makes a promise, he is not free to break it; and the everlasting God will not break His promise; He delights to fulfill it; He has declared that all His promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. But for our consolation, when we survey God under the high and terrible aspect of a sovereign, we have this to reflect on—that He is under covenant bonds of promise to be faithful to the souls who seek Him. His throne must be a throne of grace to His people!

And once more, and sweetest thought of all, every covenant promise has been endorsed and sealed with blood, and far be it from the everlasting God to pour scorn upon the blood of His dear Son! When a king has given a charter to a city, he may before have been absolute, and there may have been nothing to check his prerogatives, but when the city has its charter, then it pleads its rights before the king. Even thus God has given to His people a charter of untold blessings, bestowing upon them the sure mercies of David. Very much of the validity of a charter depends upon the signature and the seal, and, my beloved, how sure is the charter of covenant grace! The signature is the handwriting of God Himself, and the seal is the blood of the only-begotten! The covenant is ratified with blood, the blood of His own dear Son; it is not possible that we can plead in vain with God when we plead the blood-sealed covenant, ordered in all things and sure! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the power of the blood of Jesus with God can never fail! It speaks when we are silent, and it prevails when we are defeated. Better things than that of Abel does it ask for, and its cry is heard. Let us come boldly, for we bear the promise in our hearts; when we feel alarmed because of the sovereignty of God, let us cheerfully sing—

*“The gospel bears my spirit up,
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”*

May God the Holy Spirit help us to use aright from this time forward, “The throne of grace.” Amen.

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