

DONE IN A DAY, BUT WONDERED AT FOREVER

NO. 953

A SERMON
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“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the LORD of hosts, shall you call every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree.”
Zechariah 3:9-10.

WE cull the text from one of Zechariah's most instructive visions. It is a stone from a diamond field, all the context is rich in precious things, but we cannot, though we would be very glad to do so, linger over them this morning, we must be satisfied with this one brilliant. Taking the text as it stands and by itself, it is evidently descriptive of those long expected and happy days when God will once for all forgive His Israel, and restore His long-banished ones to their former place of favor and of joy, and as a consequence thereof shall cause them to dwell in their own land under the happiest circumstances, surrounded by peace and enjoyment, praising and blessing the God of mercy.

But, we may from the dealings of God with one particular case, usually extract the rule of the divine procedure, for the Lord is under no necessity to alter His modes of action, and is not subject to change. As He works in one case so may we expect Him to do in another, if the circumstances taken in are all similar. I purpose this morning, to draw therefore from the text nothing about Israel after the flesh, but much concerning the spiritual Israel, believing souls who are the true seed of the father of the faithful. Our objective will be to glorify the fullness and richness of the divine mercy which pardons the greatest sin and sheds abroad the most delightful peace. May the Holy Spirit now instruct both the preacher and the congregation. While all our eyes are gazing upon the promise of grace, may it be fulfilled in our midst.

I. Our first remarks will gather around the question, WHAT IS TO BE REMOVED?

What does the text speak of? The reply is, “*the iniquity of that land.*” The term “*iniquity,*” or, in-equity, is a very comprehensive one—including everything that is not equitable, not right towards God, not just towards man. It comprehends the entire compass of sin, for a sin of commission is an in-equity of excess, and an omission is an in-equity of falling short. The text therefore in the term “*iniquity*” comprehends every violation of equity either by way of transgression or shortcoming, sins against the first and second table, sins of the body, the hand, the tongue, sins which more immediately spring from and end in the soul, sins against God and man, sins of youth, and sins of old age. Widely extended as iniquity is, God declares that He will remove all of it from His people in one day.

The great variety of the sin to be removed is clear from the additional words “*that land.*” The offenses of a whole nation make up a complete catalog of crimes. When high and low, old and young, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, are considered as one body, the mass of their united sin is diversified indeed. In the throng I see a despiser of parents in one place, and a Sabbath breaker in another, take the land over you will be sure to find liars, slanderers, drunkards, gluttons, swearers, thieves, harlots, murderers, and I know not what of wickedness besides.

The one city of Jerusalem was so sinful that Ezekiel likened it to a boiling pot, and said of it, “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein. She has wearied herself with lies. In your filthiness is lewdness.” In a land so large as Israel, though comparatively small, there must have been criminals of all kinds, wretches defiled with sins of the blackest dye, a more than Newgate calendar of reprobates, and yet it is promised that all these varieties of sin shall be removed in one day, from sins of thought and heart right up to blood-red murder, and the most desperate adulteries—all are spoken of as to be

removed. The iniquity of a land, however, is not only that of the generation then dwelling in it, but the accumulated sin of past generations, even as we read that “the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.”

If anyone would speak correctly of the sins of Israel he would not mean the sins of the Israel of that particular hour, but the heaped-up sins of their fathers who had provoked God many long generations before. Now grasp the grand idea of mercy’s boundless plan, in one day, the promise declares that God shall not only remove all the sin of one man, but all the sins of many men, yea, and all the sins that have accumulated and laid up a store of His wrath against a nation.

What mercy is this which blots out the long records of the past, sweeps out the rotting heaps of old transgression and cleanses the Augean stable of a guilty nation’s sin! “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” What a miracle of infinite mercy! The iniquity rises before us like a huge mountain, whose peak defies the thunderbolts of God, but lo, eternal mercy, like a sea swallows up the mountain and it is gone, to be found no more. It is clear, then, from the text, that the Lord is able to forgive sins of every shade and form.

What is your sin, my hearer? Is it one peculiar to you? Yet can God forgive it. Are your sins of many sorts, so that you could not set them in order before your eyes because they are too varied and multitudinous? Yet can He remove them all in one day. No matter though one of your sins lie as it were, in the far east, and another be found in the far west, He can cleanse the whole land of your nature. Though one of your sins be an attack upon the heights of heaven, and another dives into the lowest blasphemies of hell, yet He is both the God of the hills and of the Valleys, and such enormities as yours He can remove.

When a whole land is purged, sins similar to yours must have been in the number of those blotted out, and therefore there is hope for you, since what has been done can be done again. What are your sins, are they as scarlet? “Nay,” says one, “they are of another hue.” Well, then, if they are crimson He will make one as wool and the other as snow, He will take away all iniquity, He will forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy. Whatever their tint and shade, and however double-dyed and ingrained our sins may be, the blood of Jesus can remove them all in one day.

In addition, let every sinner here remember that the text indicates not only variety of sin, but vast quantities of sin—the sin of a land consisting of millions of people is no light thing to remove in one day, yet the promise guarantees it. Eternal love takes to itself the new sharp threshing instrument of the atonement, and therewith beats the mountains of sin till they become as chaff, and the wind does carry them away. Learn, then, that however many your sins may be—you might as well count the sands on the seashore as number your transgressions—they can all be removed from you as far as the east is from the west. As the tide covers all the sand, so can forgiveness cover all your sin. As night covers all things, so can love cast a mantle over all your wrong doings. As the sun exhales a myriad dewdrops, so can eternal love cause all your sins to pass away.

In the case of Israel, the iniquity to be removed had been continuous and aggravated. The iniquity of the land of Israel was an iniquity which had continued from generation to generation. Their first fathers rebelled in the wilderness, they sinned afterwards under the judges, they revolted under the Kings, more and more they went astray, and when sold into captivity they still transgressed, if cured of one sin, they became more inveterate in another, though idolatry had been driven out of the Jews before our Savior’s time, yet their heart was still apostate, for they crucified the Lord of glory.

So, my dear hearer, if the continued sin of the Jews, which had for so long a period accumulated, could be put away from the land in one day, so can yours. O you sinners of ripe years, O you transgressors of seventy or eighty years, there is hope for you. From the text I hear the silver trumpets ring, “I will remove the iniquity in one day”—the continuous iniquity—then why not your continued iniquity? Though you have added stone of sin to stone, till the cairn of your transgressions stands as a memorial to God against you, yet He can remove the heap, and that in one single day. Is not this good news to sinners? I am sure it is to me. I do devoutly bless and thank my heavenly Father that He has put such great promises in His Word, and spoken so largely of His mercy to the guilty, for mine is a case of

which I am obliged to say as Baxter did, “O Lord of mercy, give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn, I must have great mercy or I perish.”

See then, in the text the power of God to remove sin very remarkably set forth. The prophet speaks of the sin of a whole land, of a most sinful land, a highly privileged land which had turned every privilege into provocation, yet in one day the Lord would remove it all. The inference is clear, O penitent sinner, that He can remove your sin also.

O you hearer of the Gospel, convicted in your own conscience of having been a trifler with divine things, despair not, for though you have gone as far as you can in sin, the Lord through Jesus Christ, can put your sin away. I know how your mind is this morning, if you are aroused to see your state by nature, you are mourning that ever you had a being. O man, it were indeed enough to make you mourn that you were born, if there were not hope of a second birth, and hope in the infinite mercy of God for the removal of your hideous defilements. Take heart from the text, and approach your gracious King, through Jesus the appointed Mediator, for if you believe, He will this day, even this day take away all your transgressions, receive you graciously, and love you freely. The wayfaring man, though a fool, may in this text clearly see that our God is abundantly able to pardon, for He removes a nation’s accumulated iniquity in one day.

II. Secondly, we shall consider WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH IT. “I will *remove* the iniquity of that land in one day.” It shall be remitted and forgiven.

In some parts of Scripture we read of sin being “wiped out,” and the expression is remarkably expressive. Sometimes the wiping out refers to the housewife’s meaning of the word—when the dish is wiped out and turned bottom upwards, so can God take our sinful souls and wipe them right out, so that they shall be perfectly clean, and the pot which was filthy and had death in it shall be “holiness unto the Lord.” At other times the wiping out refers to the erasure of notes made upon tablets. Some writings were cleared off with a sponge, at other times, if the tablet was of wax, and the marks were made with an iron pen, or stylus, then the wax was softened and smoothed again, and all evidence of the record totally disappeared.

Though our sins are written with an iron pen, and graven with the point of a diamond upon the very horns of our altars, yet will the Lord make the record to disappear when His mercy is revealed to our faith. He blots out the handwriting which was against us, He puts it out of the way, nailing it to the cross, He makes our sins, like clouds, to pass away forever. God can, O sinner, wipe out your transgressions so that they shall not exist, through the precious blood of Jesus He can finish your transgressions, and make an end of all your sin.

If we take the word “remove” as it stands in the text, then it is as though a great stone lay at the door of God’s mercy, “sin lies at the door,” who shall roll us away the stone? “I,” says God, “will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.” Or it is like a burden pressing on our shoulders. Speak of the load which Atlas carried, when he is fabled to have sustained the world, it was nothing compared with this more than Atlantean load which crushes us down, and will crush us to the lowest hell. “I will remove it,” says the Savior, and He has kept His word.

He took the load upon His own shoulders, and so removed it from us, and then He carried it right up to the cross, and from the top of Calvary He hurled it into His sepulcher, and there He left it, a dead and buried thing, and if it be searched for it shall not be found, “Yea, it shall not be,” says the Lord. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His people. It is as though sin were looked upon as a substance exceedingly heavy, but capable of removal, not, however, capable of removal by any human hands, for it is as firmly settled in its place as the everlasting hills, but the Lord plucks it up by its roots, removes it, and casts it into the depths of the sea.

Blessed be His name, He has so removed our sin, as believers, that none can ever bring it back again to accuse or condemn us. He has fulfilled the promise, “I will remove the iniquity of that land,” and once removed by sovereign grace, never shall it be brought back again. “As far as the east is from the west”—measure that, you astronomers!—“As far as the east is from the west”—O swift-winged angel, compute

the space! “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” The Lord has done it, it is finished, our iniquity is removed, the depths have covered our sins, they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Listen patiently to this word. The removal of our transgressions lies in four things. There is the removal of *the punishment*. The man whom God pardons cannot be punished for sin. It were a mock pardon that left a man in the executioner’s custody. The royal pardon bids every angel of justice hold off his hand. Your sins shall never rise against you, sinner, if God forgives them. For you there is no hell, for you no never-dying worm, no fire unquenchable. Forgiven! The sentence is stayed, nay, revoked.

The removal of transgression implies next, the taking away of the *guilt* of it as before the Lord. Sin has made God angry, it is a breach of His law, it is a dishonor to His name, yet God will forgive the believing sinner so that no anger shall linger in His bosom against him. He will cast his sins behind His back, put them out of His mind. Oh, miracle of miracles! Can God put anything behind His back when He sees all things? Can Omniscience find a corner where its eye can never peer? Yes, He says, “I will cast your sins behind my back.”

O God, Your Word in this case is marvelous and strange, but we perceive right well Your gracious meaning, the transgressions of Your people shall not be remembered against them anymore forever, their guilt is utterly removed.

The removal of sin implies, thirdly, the putting away of *the defilement* of sin. Sin makes us to be polluted creatures, we are like degraded priests no longer clad in fair white garments, but wearing sordid, and filthy robes. When the sin is put away, the defilement consequent upon it also is cleansed, and we become pure before God, personally acceptable with God. What a mercy is this! It is no less a mercy to be cleansed from personal defilement than to be delivered from future punishment.

Again, the removal of sin includes, in the fourth place, the total destruction of *the dominion of sin* over our nature. Not that in us sin has lost all its power, but that in the believer it has lost its reigning power, and is dethroned. The position of sin in a natural man is that of a king on his throne, the position of sin in a Christian is that of a bandit hiding in secret places trying to get back its old usurped dominion, but failing in the attempt, for “sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.” Thus the promise of the text is a very full one, the removal of sin includes the remission of the punishment, the putting away of the guilt, the cleansing of the defilement, and the dethronement of the evil power.

Ah, my dear hearers, my heart leaps within me for joy, to think that I am able to tell you that such a fourfold, four times precious blessing is to be conferred by God upon poor sinful men. O sinner, how I wish you would have it this day. I love the word “this day.” If in one day a land’s iniquity could be so completely removed, why not yours today? Why not on this Lord’s-day? How true a Sabbath would it become to you? If you believe you have your sin removed, faith finds out the great Sin-bearer, and sees the transgression borne away by Him. O that pardoning grace were given to every one in this assembly, so that it could be safely said, “The Lord has removed the iniquity of the whole congregation of the Tabernacle in one day.” Talk not of bell ringing—oh, what heart ringing, what heavenly songs, what soundings of the golden harps there would be if it might be so! O that the Almighty Spirit would apply the atoning blood, and remove the iniquity of all this multitude in one single day! Do it, Lord, and we will bless Your gracious name.

III. But we must turn to the third point, which is this—HOW LONG IT TAKES TO REMOVE THE SIN. “I will remove the iniquity of the land *in one day*.”

It took a great many days to pile up the sin, but one day sees it removed. The iniquity of the land began when the people entered it, they had not been long in Canaan before Achan took of the forbidden thing, and he was but a type of the rest. They were a stiff-necked and rebellious people, whose very nature was averse to the service of the Lord their God. Throughout the hundreds of years of the judges, the kings, the captivities, and so on, they continued to revolt from the divine authority, they heaped up transgression till it stood aloft in mountainous height, and yet when the dreadful pile was completed the

Lord made it disappear in one day. Yes, and our sins have taken a long time to heap up, they comprise the sins of our youth, the sins of our manhood, the transgressions of our riper years, and it may be we have added to these the sins of our old age. There one may say as he looks at his sin, "That is forty years' work." Another may mournfully confess, "That is seventy years' accumulation." If each sin deserves a tear, O to be a Naomi, for we have need that clouds and rains dwell in our eyes, our souls have need of all the watery things that nature can produce. But we may dry our tears, for though many days were taken for the formation of the sin, the Lord says He will remove it all in one day. In one single day seventy years of sin are forever put away by our Lord Jesus, truly for this His name shall be called "WONDERFUL."

Think, dear brethren, that this iniquity could not have been removed by all the repenting in the world. Though a man should repent of sin, if it were possible, not for one day, but for twenty thousand years, yet he could not remove his sin by repentance. Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin, and he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed, but when he takes it out again, if his eye be clear, he says, "Alas! it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better, I must add a more pungent salt, I must use stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart." He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time as he takes it out his own eyes become more keen, and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before.

Then goes he and takes unto himself niter and much soap, but when he has used it all, when he has gone to his church, when he has gone to his chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done I know not what to prove the genuineness of his repentance, ah! the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be, let him do what he may. Yet what your repentings cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, sinner, and that in one single day.

The people of Israel had been chastised very severely, many times carried away captive, and pillaged and robbed, but as often as they were chastised they so often returned to their sins, till the Lord said, "Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more." Now, what many years of chastisement could not remove, God's mercy removed in a single day. Oh, how some of you have been flogged and whipped! You have lost your property, perhaps, lost your health, it may be, through early sin, lost the dearest friends you ever had, you have been tried in body, tried in estate, but for all that you hug your sin, and the guilt of it still clings to you. Ah, but JEHOVAH Jesus can remove it in one day! What His providence cannot do, His grace can do. In one day infinite mercy can remove the sin.

During all the years that Israel had sinned, they had still offered sacrifices, but their sacrifices had never taken away sin. It is clear since they had to offer the sacrifices every year, that their sins were not removed, for then no further sacrifice would have been needed. So, my dear hearer, no sacrifice of yours or mine can ever take away sin. There are men still in what is called this enlightened nineteenth century, who impertinently claim to be a special caste of priests, and to offer a sacrifice on our behalf before God. Well, let them go on with their worship if they will, let the priests of Baal cry aloud and spare not even to the chapter's dreadful end, but no sin is ever put away in this fashion, the one sacrifice of Christ upon Golgotha, the one sin-bearing of transgression upon Calvary, has put away sin in one day, and put it away forever, so that no further sacrifice is wanted, no new blood, no new atonement—

"Tis done, the great transaction's done,"

heaven is satisfied, justice is content, mercy has a free channel, God is glorified. In one day, without help, solitary, alone, God in the person of His Son has put away the transgression of His elect, and put it away forever and ever.

Thus I might continue to show you the marvelous act of God in thus putting away iniquity in one day, because the pains of hell even could not have removed sin, not even throughout eternity. Banished

from God's presence, the sinner at the end of ten thousand times ten thousand years, would be as guilty as he was before, and as liable still to bear the wrath of God, for him no hope that suffering could ever make atonement, he must, forever and forever, as long as God's Word is true, lie under the weight of sin. For there ought to be among Christians no question about the doctrine of eternal punishment, there could be none if men were not wise above what is written, for if heaven be eternal, hell must be. "These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," the two things are put together in such a way that you must doubt the one if you doubt the other. Nay, you cannot rightly believe God concerning the one side without believing Him as to the other also.

But herein is the triumph of Christ. Dreadful as sin is, His cross is more glorious; awful as the transgression against God's law is, so awful that none can measure its tremendous deeps, yet more glorious still is that most effectual atonement which Christ has wrought out and brought in, by which in one single day He has removed forever all the sin of His people.

Oh! but this is a grand text, who shall speak of it as he should? I wish that you would feel it, my dear friends, and that would be better than my speaking upon it. Let it be then literally stated that in one single moment all the sin which lies upon a sinner can be swept away. The word "*one day*" is used to show that the act of God in forgiving sin is instantaneous. Christ in one day put away sin by His suffering and death, faith brings Christ to us, and—

*"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ's blood."*

The dying thief had not to wait a month to get pardon, or else he would have died unsaved, he did but say, "Lord, remember me," and the answer came, "Today shall you be with me in paradise." You may have begun this morning the blackest sinner out of hell, you may ere this service be closed, if God's grace meet with you, be pure through the precious blood. Who shall describe that wondrous change from darkness into marvelous light, from death into spiritual life? May the Eternal Spirit work such a change as that in you. Remember, this change is not only possible to ordinary sinners, to such as have been moral and have kept within the bounds of the laws that regulate mankind in reference to themselves, but it is true of the very worst of sinners, the most degraded, depraved, abandoned, those who have gone to the utmost extravagance of transgression.

One single day, faith being exercised, will put your guilt all away, one single word from the great King, "*Absolvo te*," "I absolve you," and all sin is gone. She to whom Christ said, "Your sins which are many are forgiven you," received the pardon there and then. May that same voice in the power of the Spirit speak to some hearts today, and may they go out of this place justified, saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies: who is he that condemns?"

IV. One would like to linger here, but I must not, for we must notice, in the fourth place, WHO IT IS THAT REMOVES INIQUITY IN ONE DAY.

Here is the point of the text, "*I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.*" "*I*," "*I*," "*I*." That accounts for the wonder. What cannot God do? He can pluck the sun from his sphere, quench the lamps of night, shake the heavens, and dry up the sea, nothing is impossible to God, nor too hard for Him. "*I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.*" When JEHOVAH puts His hand to a work, then is it done. All without Him must fail, but when *He* does it, how readily is it accomplished! It is always "*I*" when you come to the pardon of sin. "*I, even I, am even he that blots out your transgressions.*" How He "*I's*" it there. "*I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions.*" JEHOVAH alone can say unto the soul, "*I am your salvation. Who can forgive sins but God only.*" He forgives all your iniquities. He laid our sins on Jesus, and He therefore Himself takes them away from us. It is the Lord who pardons, the

Lord who cleanses evermore. Hope you then, O worn-out transgressor, bowed down with sin, what could not be done by others God can do.

Tarry a moment over that word “I.” Let me take it and translate it. The “I” of JEHOVAH is not one, but three. To begin, then—“May the grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ* be with you,” for it is He who says, “I will remove the iniquity of that land.” He was laid as the one foundation stone of our hope, upon which seven eyes are fixed, He who was graven with the graver’s tool when He was fastened to the cross, and His side was pierced, He it is who has removed the iniquity of His people in one day, by bearing it, by making a recompense to Almighty justice for it all. See you, then, the Crucified, He uplifts His pierced hand. He bares His open side, and He says—“Sinner, look to me, I will remove your iniquity in one day.”

But, “May the love of God be with you,” for it is the *Father* who says, “I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.” The returning prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned,” and it was the father, the same offended father, who bid them take off his rags, and kill for him the fatted calf, it was the father who rejoiced that his son that was lost was found, and that he who was dead was alive again, the Father, therefore, removes the sins of His children.

And, “May the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you,” for it is the *Holy Spirit* also who says, “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day.” He brings the blood that Jesus shed, the Jesus that the Father gave, applies it to the conscience, sprinkles it upon the heart, and makes those to be actually and experientially cleansed who in God’s sight were cleansed by the death of Christ. “I will remove it.”

Oh, did you ever feel within your heart, the power of the Holy Spirit removing your iniquity in one day? I shall never forget when my iniquity was removed, it was indeed in one single moment. Wretched I was, and more, my sins terrified, alarmed me, they haunted me day and night, they made me to sit on the doorstep of hell, but how changed was the scene when I heard and understood that text, “Look unto me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” for then I was enabled to look to Jesus, and one look removed mountains. As I looked, my iniquity was forgiven, my joy was overflowing. I had to restrain myself and to do violence to my feelings in order to keep my seat. If the Methodists cry out, “Hallelujah,” I could for once have cried out, “Hallelujah,” with the loudest of them.

Oh, the bliss of pardon, when it comes by the Holy Ghost! You may hear about it, my brethren, you may read about it, and both of these are well in their way, I hope you will continue both to hear and read, but these are not enough, it is essential that you receive the Word with living power within from God Himself, against whom you have offended. You can only find this pardon and peace by looking to Jesus. The simple act of throwing yourself into His dear arms will bring it, nothing else will, it will come at once, come suddenly, and when it comes it will bring to you results of blessedness that shall know no end. “I,” says God, “I will do it.” “Give unto the LORD, then, you pardoned, give unto the LORD glory and strength; give unto the LORD the glory that is due unto his name.” Take now your songs and go forth and sing, “O GOD, I will praise you: for though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me.” If you choose your joy in that sweet verse of our poet, you will do well—

*“Jesus is become at length,
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.*

*Praise ye then His glorious name,
Publish His exalted fame,
Still His worth your praise exceeds;
Excellent are all His deeds.”*

Continue till you mount to heaven to sing, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory forever and ever.”

V. And now to conclude. The last point of the text is, WHAT STATE FOLLOWS PARDON. “They shall call every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree.” Yes, wherever pardon comes, *peace* of God follows.

In times of war the fig trees are cut down, the vines are destroyed, and if not, the inhabitants are kept within doors, and often are driven into the caves of the earth for shelter, but the picture before us in the text represents the people as sitting at ease in their gardens, and in their courtyards, where the luxuriant vines yield them shelter. The words admirably picture a scene of peace—each man under his vine and fig tree.

I wonder why it is people cannot quote Scripture rightly in prayer, but there are very few who ever do. How often have I heard, “They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree, *none daring to make them afraid.*” I would like to find that in the Bible. The text in Micah is, “And none shall make them afraid.” They dare do it, but they cannot do it. There is the point. They dare, but they cannot. The impudence of Satan is unlimited, he dare do anything, but he cannot though he dare. Our text does not mention the fact, but it implies that no enemy can molest. A soul pardoned is a soul at peace. If God forgive me, nothing can distress me. “Strike,” said Luther, “strike, Lord, if You will, for now You have forgiven me I will bear Your strokes and sing.”

Oh, yes! if sin be pardoned nothing can harm us, for us the poison is gone, the sting is departed, the evil is annihilated, we have in the pardon of sin an antidote for all that might have distressed us, we must and shall have peace.

But the text implies also *neighborliness*. They are not each one to sit under the vine, and under the fig tree, and say “Glory be to God I am a pardoned man, I am saved, I do not care about my neighbors one bit,” not so, he that is a gracious soul invites his neighbor (for so it might run) invites him to commune with him. Grace is the most neighborly thing in the world, Christ’s people are called sheep, sheep are gregarious, you do not meet sheep one by one, they go in flocks, they love company, good company.

So you shall find the people of God, they are good company-keeping people, I do not mean that they have great entertainments, and care for idle chit-chat, but this is how they are described, “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard.” Somebody said, “The good friends at the Tabernacle blocked up the steps a good deal after service by standing to talk with one another.” Well, if you talk about Christ, and things divine, the more you talk the better, of holy conversation there need be no stint.

If you talk against your neighbor, be home with you, if you talk gossip and scandal, you have no right to do it on the Tabernacle steps—nay, where have you a right to do it? Gossiping slander is at all times vile, but if our conversation be of Jesus, then the more we speak together, and the more sociable we are, the more the house of God on earth becomes like heaven above. God save us from a stiff gentility that knows nobody because it does not know itself. May we, on the other hand, rejoice in what God has done for us and all His people, and therefore, make ourselves familiar with the consecrated brotherhood of saints.

Do not only sit under the fig tree, but call each man his neighbor. Say, “Rejoice with me, come and help my joy, I cannot rejoice alone. Come and hear, all you that fear God, I will tell you what God has done for my soul.” We will make even the heathen among whom we dwell to say, “The LORD has done great things for them,” and we will say, “Yea, the LORD has done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” Christian sociability, Christian communion, Christian friendship, Christian communication the one with the other, is a most desirable and fitting thing, and where sin is pardoned and peace is implanted it is quite sure to follow.

But I must note again there is not only peace and neighborliness in the text, but there is *comfort*. They might sit, and they might sit together in misery, but in this case they sit in comfort under the vine, its broad leaves giving them shade, under the fig tree, there, too, finding a cool retreat from the heat of the day. And oh! how believers when they meet together in communion, what comfort they have in the

Holy Ghost! I could not help rejoicing today over a good sister who has been away from here a long time, and had a deal of trouble, when she said, “Oh, but I should not have minded the trouble if I could have got to the Tabernacle on Sundays and weekdays, for there you could at least forget your troubles for an hour or two, and then go away strong to contend with them again.” Yes, and when sitting under the shadow of Christ, under the leaves of His truth, under the droppings of His familiar love, Christian fellowship becomes very sweet. One almost feels, when Jesus draws near to our assemblies, that if heaven be better than this it must be very good indeed. We get such earnest anticipation of the joy of the glorified saints that we are fairly overcome with excess of delight.

But note, it was not only comfort they had, but substantial *enjoyment*, and real supply of needs. They sat under the vine, then there was wine for them to drink, they sat under the fig tree, then there were figs for them to eat. So when God gives pardon and peace, He gives to our souls a satisfaction with good things, we find in Jesus Christ, if we sit under His shadow with delight, that His fruit is sweet unto our taste—

*“All my capacious powers can wish
In Christ doth richly meet;
Nor to mine eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”*

Now, my beloved friends, you that are unsaved and remain so, I can understand that you seek company, and that you will go and call to every man his neighbor, “Come, let us make mirth, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, let us break the Sabbath, let us break God’s bands asunder, and cast his cords from us,” I can understand that, and I think you also can understand that the company you keep on earth will be the company you will have to keep forever. “Bind them in bundles to burn them,” will be the Lord’s command. Like with like. They that depart from Christ on earth will hear Him say, “Depart, you cursed, forever.” O that you might be led to seek God, and then to seek His people. But as for you that love God, I am sure if grace be reigning in your hearts, you will feel a yearning after holy company, and your company will be such as love what you love, such as hope to be with Jesus where you will be. “Oh, but God’s people have many faults!” My dear friend, so have you, but despite all the faults of the church—

*“My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”*

There is no better company than the company that Christ keeps, there is no better house than the house that Christ inhabits. May we be willing to be doorkeepers in the house of God, glad to be the least in the church, so long as we may be numbered among the chosen, redeemed by the blood of Jesus. May the Lord give us perfect pardon, perfect peace for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 103, ZECHARIAH 3.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.