

A WILDERNESS CRY NO. 1427

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1878,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.”
Psalm 63:1, 2.*

CHRYSOSTOM tells us that among the primitive Christians it was decreed and ordained that no day should pass without the public singing of this psalm, and certainly, if we do not follow the ancient custom and actually sing the words every day, it is not because they are unsuitable or because their spirit has died out among us. This psalm may be said or sung all the year round. Have we joyous days? Let us sing of the loving kindness which is better than love. Do the clouds return after the rain? Let us sound forth His praise whose right hand upholds us. Is it summertime with our souls? Then we may express the full assurance of our faith by joyfully crying, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.” Have we fallen upon the drought of autumn? Do the long hot days parch our spirits? Then may we chant the desire of our longing heart, “My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” Is it winter with our spirit and does everything tend to chill us? Nevertheless let us not be silenced or rendered sluggish by the cold, but let us say, “I will bless You while I live, I will lift up my hands in Your name.” Has the spring returned with all its wealth of fresh flowers and opening sweets? Then shall our glad voices sing aloud, “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.” Is the day ended and has the darkness of night settled down upon our mind? Then in the language of the psalm we will remember God upon our bed and meditate upon Him in the night watches. And because He has been our help, therefore in the shadow of His wings we will rejoice. We may sing this psalm in the days of battle, when those round about us, seek our soul to destroy it, for “they shall fall by the sword, they shall be a portion for foxes.” And we may chant it with equal appropriateness in the time of victory, when we return from the conflict with banners gleaming in the sunlight of triumph, for “the king shall rejoice in God: everyone that swears by Him shall glory.” I know of no time and no season in which this psalm would sound unsuitably from a believing tongue. Let us cultivate its earnestness. Let us endeavor to be baptized into its spirit. Let us live while we live, after the fashion of holy men like David, the psalmist, whose assurance of heart sorrow could not shake, whose fertility of mind the desert could not wither, whose joy of spirit solitude could not destroy.

This psalm however, especially belongs to any, who by their circumstances or by their state of heart feel themselves to dwell in a desert land. There is a stage of Christian experience in which we are in Egypt and we are brought up out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This symbolizes conviction, regeneration and conversion. Then we know the passover and the sprinkling of the blood, the enemies drowned in the sea and the new song put into our mouth. Happy are they who have come thus far on their life journey. Then comes the stage of spiritual history, which may be well described as wilderness experience, wherein we have little rest, much temptation and consequent proving of heart and discovery of inward weakness. Many remain in this condition far longer than is necessary. What might be soon ended is drawn out into 40 years by unbelief. Then comes that blessed stage of experience in which faith begets peace and joy. Then we have crossed the Jordan and entered into rest in Christ Jesus, “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” In the man who is our peace we obtain an earnest of heaven and begin to divide the land of promise, “for He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places.” Each man claims his lot in covenant provisions and sits under his own vine and fig tree, none making him afraid. Yet even after we have been raised up together with Jesus and have obtained citizenship in Zion, we may find ourselves in the wilderness. As David, though king in Israel, had to flee across the Jordan to escape from Absalom, so may the most assured and the most

sanctified of God's people be driven for a while, into the dry and thirsty land where no water is, and there hide himself from the offspring of his own flesh. There are songs for the Lord's banished ones to sing in a strange land, psalms with which to arouse the silent land, sonnets to charm the howling wilderness into a fruitful garden and hymns to make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. I purpose to address myself this morning to any of my brethren who feel themselves to be just now in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. It may be the Lord will give them deliverance by His Word this morning, or if not delivered out of temporal trouble, they shall at least be made glad by His Holy Spirit and be led to magnify His name while yet in the land of drought.

I. Our first head this morning shall be this, TRUE SAINTS ARE SOMETIMES IN A DRY AND THIRSTY LAND WHERE NO WATER IS. Children of God are not always in the same happy state of mind. To hear some people talk, who know but little of religious experience, you would fancy that the Christian's life is all feasting and dancing. Children think that all there is in hunting is wearing a red coat and blowing a horn. They know nothing of the rough riding. We do, it is true, linger delightfully in the sweet valley of humiliation, where men have found pearls and met with angels. We know that spot of which the pilgrim's guide has said, "Behold, how green this valley is, also how beautiful with lilies." But we can never forget that in this quiet meadow Christian met Apollyon and was hard put to it in the fight and but a little farther in his journey, he came to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where there are deep ditches and quagmires and a narrow pathway which runs hard by the mouth of hell. Sweet rest is to be had in the Palace Beautiful, but there is also a Hill Difficulty to be climbed. Let not the young be deceived by fluttering words, for they may be sure of this, that there are bitters as well as sweets in the pilgrim life and he who would be a Christian must not count upon unbroken joy.

All things are changeable. We live in a world which hourly varies. What do our thermometers and barometers mean? Are they not measures of perpetual change? The things which live change even more than inanimate objects and the more of life usually the more of sensitiveness, and the more of sensitiveness so much the more of change. Your man of marble may appear to sweat through the condensation of the vapor around him, but he cannot possibly know anything of that dew of toil which covers the laboring limb. The cast in plaster is ignorant of the joy and the sorrow which flash through the man of flesh and blood. Your painted picture hanging on the wall represents a smiling ancestor who smiles on, although his estates may have been alienated and his family disgraced. But not so the living parent, who anxiously regards each turn in the affairs of his children. For him there are tears as well as smiles. A man of stone changes not, but a man of flesh feels the movement of the years. The plow of time gradually furrows his forehead and the crow's feet of age appear in the corners of his eyes. Living men must mourn and suffer as well as laugh and rejoice, for minds and hearts must change. Wonder not, therefore, that the glad-hearted sons of Zion are not always in the temple, but sometimes are driven into exile and sigh in a desert land.

But beyond the fact of liability to change there are other reasons why God's people at times are wanderers in the wilderness. *In some senses, to a Christian, this world must always be a dry and thirsty land.* The new life which grace has implanted in us finds nothing here below upon which it can feed. The things which are seen are too gross, material, carnal and defiled, to sustain life which comes by the Holy Spirit from the great Father. We are not carrion crows; else we might float upon the carcasses which abound in the waters around our ark. We are doves and when we leave the hand of our Noah, we find nothing to rest upon and we must go back to Him if we are to find food and rest for our souls. I am not speaking now of the world under its sorrowful aspect only, but of the world at its best. It is a dry land for saints even when its rains are falling. When the world dresses itself in scarlet and puts on its silks and satins, it is still a poor world for us. She may paint her face and adorn her head, but she is a Jezebel for all that. The world, should she come to us as she came to Solomon, would still be a deceiver. If she would indulge us with all her riches and give us all her power and all her fame, she would still be a mere mocker to the heart which is born from above. If you could stand on a high mountain and see all the kingdoms of the world before you and the glory thereof, and hear a voice saying, "All this will I give you," yet might you turn round to Satan and say, "And all this is nothing to me, a sop for a dog, but not food for a child." And then you might lift your eyes to the great Father above and say, "Who have I in heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." You shall take prosperity at its flood. You shall have health and strength. You shall have all that heart can wish. But, after all, if there is

a spark of divine life within you, your heart will compute the sum total of all earth's joys and say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." To a citizen of heaven, this world is "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." If it is so at its best, what is it at its worst? If its pillows of down cannot rest us, what shall we say of its thorns and briars? If its flood tide cannot bear us up, what shall we say of its neap tide and its ebb, when mire and dirt succeed a glassy sea? Ah, truly, best or worst, it is well for us to look above the world and to fix our heart where our treasure is preserved, even in heaven.

But, dear brethren, we could bear up with this present state and be well satisfied with it, if that were our only difficulty. But far more grievous is the fact that *we carry an evil within us which would cause drought in Paradise itself, if it could go there*. The Christian gets into a land of drought because his own nature is dry. He finds a barren soil without because he has a barren heart within. Verily there is no doctrine more true to experience than this, that corruption remains even in the hearts of the regenerate, and that when we would do good, evil is present with us. Within us there is still a carnal mind which is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be. And as long as we have this about us, if it is permitted for a moment to get the upper hand (and who among us is so watchful that this will never happen), it is no wonder that the joys of grace seem to disappear and we find ourselves in a spiritual wilderness. We carry about with us enough evil to make another hell, if the infernal pit were filled and its fires extinguished. "Oh, wretched man that I am," said the apostle Paul, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He said this not because He was not a saint, but because he was so far advanced in the way of holiness. The more saintly a saint becomes, the more will he loathe and mourn over the remains of indwelling sin which he finds in his nature, and this will set him longing and thirsting after more grace. When our old unbelief begins to wither our faith; when our natural indifference commences to dry up our life; when our doubts parch the pastures of our hope and our sins drain the wells of our consolation, it is little wonder if we come into a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

We may, dear friends, have been so unwatchful as to have brought ourselves into this condition by actual faults of life and conduct. I would make it a matter of personal inquiry among you, by asking thoughtful answers to a few questions. Have you restrained prayer? Do you wonder that the land grows dry? Has the Word of God been neglected? Have you left off its study of late through pressure of other concerns? Do you wonder if you have left the streams, that your soul thirsts? Have you been overly engaged in seeking temporal gain and has the hot desert wind of worldliness parched your heart? Has there been anything about your spiritual life that has grieved the Holy Spirit? Have you been idle as a Christian? Have you been content to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and to do nothing to win souls? Or have you, while you have fed upon the Word of God, taken the sweet things of the gospel as a matter of course and not blessed the Lord for them? Has there been a lack of humility or a deficiency of gratitude? If so, can you wonder that you are in a dry and thirsty land? Have you been careless in your walk? In domestic life has sin been permitted in the family? Have you been winking at evil in your children? Have you permitted it in yourself? If so, remember, it is written, "He turns rivers into a wilderness and water springs into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." You may have fallen into a parched condition of spirit because you have forgotten Him of whom in happier days you sang, "All my fresh springs are in You." Because you have walked contrary to God, God is walking contrary to you. And it is your duty, to repent and return at once to your Lord, only by doing so will peace return to you.

If these various things do not account for the believer being in a dry and thirsty land, there are still some other reasons which I will briefly mention. Sometimes Christians become very hungry and thirsty when they are *banished from the means of grace*. Poor as our ministry may be, yet there are many of God's children who would miss it more than their daily food if it were taken from them. God's servants whom He calls to the work of the ministry are bound to think little of themselves and yet the loaves and fishes which they distribute to the multitude are by no means to be lightly esteemed—the people would faint by the way if they did not have them. It is a severe trial to some saints to be kept away from sanctuary privileges. I know that when you travel for pleasure or roam by the seaside for health, if you go to a place of worship on the Sabbath and find no spiritual bread, you fall into a miserable state of mind and sigh to spend your Sabbaths where the children's portion is dealt out liberally and all the servants have bread enough to spare. David loved the very doors of the Lord's House. He thirsted and pined because

he was shut out from sanctuary privileges, and it was especially for that reason that he speaks of himself as being in a “dry and thirsty land, where no water is.”

The same may happen when we are *denied the sweets of Christian communion*. David had poor company when he was in the wilderness in the days of Saul. His friends were not much better than free-loaders and runaways, whom he would never have selected as friends had not the necessities of his own condition and of the political situation rendered it necessary that he should become a captain over them. They were a strange band of men made up chiefly of those who, were in debt and discontent, the rebellious against Saul’s wretched administration, men of broken fortunes and suspected loyalty. Few of them were fit friends for the man after God’s own heart. I do not wonder that he looked even at the sons of Zeruiah who loved him best and were his own kinsmen, and felt that as for holy communion his soul was in a dry and thirsty land where there was no water. Believers are to keep out of worldly company and yet it sometimes happens that providence throws the child of God among the ungodly, like Obadiah in the family of Ahab; Nehemiah in the palace of Artaxerxes and Daniel in the court of Darius. Your lot is hard if you are called to dwell among worldlings, for they have power to injure your piety but they cannot help you. You look around upon a score of hard faces all eager after the almighty dollar and none of them caring for the almighty God. And I do not wonder that you feel yourself to be in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. We owe much more to Christian friends than we think. And especially the younger folk among us do well to value Christian associations and to be much in the company of them that fear the Lord and that think upon His name. If they are denied this refreshment, they will find life to be a dry land where no water is.

Yes, but the same may happen from other causes as well. Sometimes a believing man may be *treated with gross injustice and endure much hardship as the result*. David was blameless and yet Saul hunted him as a traitor. He was upright, yet his people revolted from him. It tends to make a good man sour in spirit to be misrepresented and treated as guilty when he knows that he is innocent, and this bitterness is very apt to put away from us many sources of comfort and leave us uncomfortable. Then many a spring becomes dry and the heart shrivels as under a burning sun.

Sometimes too, *domestic conditions may be so changed that we cannot feel as we would wish*. I do not know how you feel, but I think many must acknowledge that when they get away from their own room and from their regular habits, they are not always able to commune with God as usual. One likes to read from the very same Bible and to kneel at the very same chair. When the time comes for meeting with God, you are, perhaps, roaming up and down amid the choicest scenery and though you are reverent and adoring, yet you find it hard to reach the sweetness of fellowship with God which you have been accustomed to enjoy at home. Everything may be very lovely around you while you are tourists, everything may be attractive and delightful, and yet I should not wonder but what you will find it to be a dry and thirsty land where no water is. I can well conceive that your hearts long for an hour of your accustomed quietude and familiarity with God. You would give anything to be back in the little room, looking out upon the hills, or to have an hour in that secluded little garden, where you have been accustomed to take your pocket Testament and sit down and hear the voice of Jesus speaking to your soul and to speak to Him in return. Even hours and places have much to do with our heart’s condition. I know not how it is, but such strange creatures are we that in one place we cannot worship as we would like to do in another and therefore, the soul finds its condition to be that of a wanderer in a dry and thirsty land.

Then, too, *much depends upon health and physical conditions*. In some forms of sickness the soul is apt to be grievously depressed and cast out of its proper condition. Some of you may remember the venerable Watts Wilkinson, the Golden Lecturer. I was reading his life the other day and he tells us that after many years of health he suffered a season of sickness. And he learned by experience that sickness is not the best time, as he had formerly thought it was, for drawing near to God. The effects of sickness are often very beneficial under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, but they are seldom so *at the time*. It is “afterwards” that these things work the fruits of righteousness, but at the time it is often with us as it was with Wilkinson, who says that he never in his life felt so dull in prayer and so heavy in reading the Scriptures as during his illness. I believe that often the condition of the body operates upon the condition of the mind and that our being in a dry and thirsty land where no water is may be occasioned by feverishness or a feebleness of the flesh. Lack of faith may sometimes be little other than a need of natural cheerfulness and we may mistake infirmity for iniquity. We have our times of natural sadness.

We have, too, our times of depression when we cannot do otherwise than hang our heads. Seasons of lethargy will also befall us from changes in our natural frame, or from weariness or the rebound of over excitement. The trees are not always green, the sap sleeps in them in the winter, and we have winters too. Life cannot always be at flood tide. The fullness of the blessing is not upon the most gracious at all times. We may always burn, but we cannot always flame. We may always grow, but we cannot always flower. And if we always bear fruit, yet the fruit is not always ripe, nor does the ripeness always wear the same delicate bloom. Till we are perfected we shall not be always at our highest point, otherwise earth would be turned to heaven and time would have forgotten itself and merged its variableness in the immutability of eternity. So you see there are many reasons why the best of saints are sometimes in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

II. The second head is a very short but very comforting one, that **GOD IS THEIR GOD STILL**—“*O God, You are my God.*” Yes, He is just as much our God in the dry land as if we sat by Siloa’s softly flowing brook which glides by the oracle of God. O God, You are my God when I see the fountain leaping from the rock in a cascade of cool refreshment and You are just as much my God if every river bed is turned to a heap of stones, and the burning sand on all sides mock my searching eyes. The Lord belongs to us by an eternal charter, which will never lose its force, for the Scripture says, “This God is our God forever and ever.” This is a very sweet and precious truth and should be remembered always. Of course, when a man falls into a dull dry state of soul, he may very well question his condition before God and he ought not to rest till the question is satisfactorily answered. But where there is living faith the fact is certain, and all question may be dismissed. God is your God still, my dear brothers and sisters, whatever condition you are in, if you can now come and grasp Him by faith and call Him yours with the voice of love. Can you join me in words like these? Lord, I have lost my comforts, I have lost my assurances, I have lost my delights, but I still trust in You. I have no God but You, neither will I worship any other, nor repose my confidence elsewhere. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You. The wounds of Jesus for my sin are still my soul’s one hope. The precious blood of Your dear Son is my sole confidence. If such is your language, you have not lost your God. All the other things you speak of may have gone for a while, but as long as you can still say, “O God, You are my God, early will I seek You,” you are still among the living in Zion and your time to rejoice shall soon come. Just think a minute. It is not possible that God’s love to His people should change with their condition. Such a theology would represent God as very variable in His love. Yes, it would do worse than that, for it would make the gospel into a law and turn all evangelical truth into legality. Does God love me because I love Him? Does God love me because I am bright and happy? Does God love me because my faith is strong and because I can leap like a hart in His ways? Why, then, He must have loved me because of something good in me, and that is not according to the gospel. The gospel represents the Lord as loving the unworthy and justifying the ungodly, and therefore I must cast out of my mind the idea that divine love depends on human conditions. Can it be true that God only loves His children when they are in good spiritual health? Is it so with me? Do I love my child when he is strong and hate him when he is sick! When I see the spots of disease upon him do I put him away and say that he is no son of mine? If his poor eyes should fail him and he should become blind, should I cast him off? If his feet should fail him and he became a helpless cripple, should I disown him? If he lost his hearing and could not listen to my voice, would I discard him? Fathers, mothers, I speak to you. Come what may to your offspring, are they not still yours? And would you not still love them? Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? The Lord has said, “They may forget, yet will He not forget His people.” Be cheered then, for into whatever state of unhappiness we may have wandered, the love of God does not depend upon our condition. It knows no ups nor downs, nor winters nor summers, nor ebbs nor flows, but abides forever sure. Even though the Lord should hide His face from us, He is still our God, for the Lord has taught us to cry, “My God, my God,” even when we have to add, “why have You forsaken me?”

When the Lord first loved us we were in a worse state than we are in now, for though we feel dry and sapless we are not utterly dead as we were then. Remember “His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” We were enemies and yet He reconciled us. And we are not enemies now, though we fear we are poor, cold-hearted friends. We are sadly sick perhaps, but we are not actually under condemnation as we were when first of all His sovereign grace came forth to

do the deed of redemption and deliver us from the wrath to come. And if the Lord loved us then, why should He not love us now?

We have not fallen into any state which takes the Lord by surprise, for He knew well enough what we should be. However we may blame ourselves and I hope we do blame ourselves severely for every evil within our hearts, yet He foreknew what we should be and is by no means disappointed in us. There has nothing happened which our God did not foreknow and if He chose us knowing all this, can it be possible that when it comes to pass He should turn from His purpose and change His mind? No, never.

Brethren, we have had great experiences, some of us, of God's love in the past and this makes us feel that He can help us and will help us in the present. In the sanctuary we have seen His power and His glory. Oh the delight, the heavenly joys which we have known at times in His service. At prayer meetings I know we have had our hearts warmed within us and felt that we could scarcely be happier in heaven. Sometimes under a sermon we have been fired as with new life and we have felt that we could begin again with double strength. If this has happened to us in former times, when we were heavy and depressed, why can it not happen again? Does not the Lord delight to revive the spirits of the faint and weary? Angels' visits may be few and far between, but not the visitations of the Spirit of God, for He dwells with us and in us forever. Before we are aware, He can make us like the chariots of Amminadib. For He has done it and what He has done He is certainly able to do again. For that reason comfort yourselves with these thoughts.

Besides, if we are in the wilderness, is not God the God of the wilderness? Were not His greatest marvels worked when He led His people about through the howling wilderness and fed them with manna and revealed Himself in a fiery, cloudy pillar? Where did Hagar look to Him who saw her, but in the wilderness? Where did Moses see the Lord in the bush, but at the backside of the desert? Where did Elijah hear a voice speaking to Him, but away there in the wilderness? And where did David, the Psalmist, meet with his God, but in the lone, solitary land where no water is? O my soul, if you are in the desert now, expect your God to meet with you. Open now your eyes and expect to see Him display His grace. Now that you are as the dry ground, He will pour floods upon you. Now that you are empty, He will fill you with His divine fullness. Your poverty prepares you to apprehend His riches. Your inward death prepares you to receive His everlasting life. Therefore, have hope and rise from your depression and fear.

III. Thus much upon the second subject, by which we are led briefly to the third, namely, **WHEN WE ARE IN A DRY AND THIRSTY LAND OUR WISEST COURSE IS TO CRY TO HIM AT ONCE.** Now, brethren, I want to speak very practically to you, as I do to myself, for many of us are deeply and personally concerned in this matter. Very likely the warmth of the atmosphere on this warm summer morning may make you feel all the duller in devotion. You may not be enjoying the things of God because the air is heavy and makes you sleepy. Let us, then, bestir ourselves and break asunder the bonds of sleep. We can only do this by crying at once to God Himself. Let us go straight away to Jesus, our friend and physician, and let us cry, "O God, You are my God, early will I seek You. My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You." Observe that David does not first pray for deliverance from the dry and thirsty land and then say, "There, I will now go and seek God." But no, in the desert, itself, he cries, "My soul thirsts for You." Learn from this and do not say, "I will get into communion with God when I feel better," but long for communion now. It is one of the temptations of the devil to tell you not to pray when you do not feel like praying. Pray twice as much then. When you feel least like praying, then pray the more, for you need it the more. And when you feel very little like coming near to God, then cry, "My God, I must be in a terrible state, or else I should have a greater longing after You. Therefore will I not rest till I find You and come to You." Do not, any of you, practice the sinner's folly. He declares that he will tarry till he is better, and then he never comes at all. No, children of God must not say, "We will seek the Lord when we are better," but you must seek Him at once. Practice the gospel principle of, "Just as I am," and come to Jesus just as you are. Lethargic, half asleep, almost dead in spirit, yet nevertheless come to Jesus. Make a plunge for it. Say, "I must have a sense of His love and I must have it now. I must not lose this blessed Sabbath morning. I must enter into fellowship with God." Make a dash for it and you shall have it. Do not wait till you are delivered, but in the dry and thirsty land sigh after God.

Neither, dear friends, pray so much for ordinances as for the Lord Himself. You see David does not say, "O God, You are my God, I will seek the sanctuary. My soul thirsts for a prayer meeting, my flesh longs for a sermon." No, he sighs for *God*, he thirsts only for God. I do believe that our Lord sometimes strikes all ordinances dry to make us feel that they are nothing without Himself. The means of grace are blessed breasts at which the soul may suck when God is in them, but they are emptiness itself, when He is not there. The preacher who has best fed you will only disappoint you if his Lord is not with him, or if you are not prepared to look beyond the man to the Master. The Lord loves to famish His people of all earthly bread and water, to bring them to wait upon only Himself. I charge you, beloved, this morning, whatever your state may be, make a direct appeal to the Lord that He would immediately give you Himself by Christ Jesus. Nothing less than this can meet your needs, and this will meet your case, though all outward ordinances should be denied. What if no point of the sermon should impress or quicken you? Yet the silent power of the Spirit of God can glide into your heart and become life to your soul. Seek it, then, and seek it believing that it may be had and had at once. The child of God may rise at once from slumber into earnestness and may leap from lethargy into zeal. It is wonderful how speedily the Spirit of God works, He needs not hours and days and weeks, in which to make us young again. He works with singular mastery over the lapse of time and perfects in an instant His good work. It was all darkness, primeval darkness, thick and black as ebony itself and Jehovah said, "Light be!" Then flashed the day and all was brightness. So may it be black as hell with you at this moment and an infernal night may brood over every faculty of your being, yet if the enlightening Spirit comes forth day shall dawn, a day that shall surprise you, a day above the brightness of that which comes of the sun.

Do not be afraid dear children of God, you that have fallen into a mournful state, do not be afraid to cry out to God this morning, in the language of the psalmist. I know we sometimes feel as if we must not and dare not pray. We have become so dull, so lifeless, so unworthy that we do not expect to be heard, and feel as if it would be presumption to cry. But our heavenly Father loves to hear His children cry all day long. Rutherford says, "The child in Christ's house that is most troublesome is the most welcome. He that makes the most noise for his meat is the best child that Christ has." You may not quite agree with that as to your own children, but it is certainly so with our Lord. Rutherford says, "It is a good child that is always whining each hour of the day for a piece and a drink." He speaks of a hungry soul hanging around Christ's pantry door and commends him for so doing. Assuredly the Lord wishes His children to have strong desires after Himself. Desire, then, and let those desires be vehement. If you can cry out to Jesus, He will joyfully hear you. If you will give Him no rest, He will give you all the rest you need. The Lord finds music in His children's cries. "Oh," you say, "I would cry, but mine is such a discordant and foolish cry." You are the very man to cry, for your sorrow will put an emphasis into your voice. Of all the cries your children utter, that comes closest home to you, which arises out of their pain and deep distress. A dying moan from a little one will pierce a mother's heart. Look, she presses the baby to her bosom! She cries, "My dear dying child," and weeps over it. You too shall be pressed to the bosom of everlasting love if you can only groan, or sob, or sigh.

Only be careful that you are not happy in a dry and thirsty land. Be careful that you are not content away from God, for if you will not rest till you get at Him, you shall soon have Him. If you will groan after Him you shall find Him. A sigh will fetch Him. May there be much longing, panting and pleading among us at this hour.

Do not let anyone here be satisfied to remain in a dull state. Do not say, "Well, but he says a child of God may get in a dry and thirsty land." Yes, I know I did, but I did not bid you fall into it, above all, I did not tell you to live in it. One of your children may fall and cut his knees, but I should not recommend all his brothers to try a tumble, nor should I exhort him to lie on the ground. The dry and thirsty land is really a dry and thirsty land to the believer, but if you can be satisfied to dwell there, it is not a dry and thirsty land to you. Now, child of God, if you have fallen into a dull state, I beseech you now to labor to rise out of it. And I do this, first, because you are not a fit person to be in such a state. Yours is the land that flows with milk and honey. You are like David, driven out of Canaan for a time, but you must never be satisfied till you get back to Jerusalem. Oh, cry unto the Lord to bring you back that you may see the King's face and sit at the King's table and delight yourself with the marrow and the fatness which you ought to feed upon every day. You are a king and a priest unto God, will you go about in sordid beggar's rags and forget your dignity and sit on a dunghill with the paupers of this miserable world? No, come

away, come away. The dry and thirsty land is not for you, but the land of plenty and of joy. Think of your obligations to your Savior. You have been bought with His precious blood. Your sins are forgiven you. You are a joint-heir with Him. Are you going to be cold and careless towards the Well-beloved of your soul? I was about to say three-fourths of all the Christian people in this world live in such a way as rather to disgrace the Redeemer than to honor Him. I have not said that, but if I had chanced to make the statement I would not retract it, for I am afraid it is true. I am afraid that many of us are no credit to Christ. If worldlings look at us, they say, "Is that a Christian?" If my Lord were to send some of His sheep to a show, they would be far enough from winning a prize. If the prize were for joyous piety some would utterly fail, if the prize were for consistent courage and strength of heart, how few of us would be "highly commended." Many of His sheep are no credit to their Feeder and reflect no honor upon their Shepherd.

Out of your dumps, my brethren! Why should you be sitting in darkness any longer with such grace to be had and such a Savior to give it? Just think, you are losing a world of joy! You are sitting like an owl in a haunted ruin, blinking your eyes, when you might be flying like an eagle straight up to the Sun of righteousness, in full communion with the great Lord of the day. Why are you down there, down in the dens and caves of the earth, howling away among the dragons, when you might be up there among the cherubim and seraphim magnifying the Lord, for "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"? I said you were children of God and therefore, I am not condemning you, but I would brush you up if I could and bestir you to walk somewhat more worthily of the obligations imposed upon you by the grace of God.

Think, my dear brothers and sisters, if you and I all get into a dull, sleepy state, what is to become of this poor world? You have to go to your class this afternoon, are you going there half awake and half asleep? Are you going to dream among your children all the afternoon? "Oh," you say, "we do not do that." Don't you? Why, many a preacher is not above half awake when he delivers his sermon and rather snores it than preaches it. Few of us ever were awake all through. We are awake, half way. Oh that we were thoroughly awake, thoroughly alive, thoroughly in earnest. No wonder sinners are given to slumber when saints sleep as they do. No wonder the unconverted think hell is a fiction, when we live as if it were so. No wonder that they imagine heaven to be a romance when we act as if it were so little a reality. Oh Lord, awake us, even if it be by thunder claps! Oh God, for Jesus Christ's sake, bring us out of the dry and thirsty land. Have You not said that if we drink of the river of the water of life, out of our belly shall flow rivers of living water, so that we shall neither complain of thirst ourselves nor shall there remain a desert around us? Help us then, to drink abundantly.

I have thus spoken to as many as believe in Jesus Christ, but to you that are unbelievers, much of this may equally well apply, for you too, are in a land still more dry and thirsty. Do not go about to sacraments and sermons, much less to priests, but go straight to God in Christ Jesus. Cry to Him! O sinner, cry to Him, "O God, though You are not my God, yet still early will I seek You. My heart longs for You. Come to me and save me." Jesus will come to you and save you, even you, to the praise of the glory of His grace. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 63, ISAIAH 35.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136, 63 (SONG. 3), 758.**

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