

THE SWEET AND THE SWEETENER NO. 2403

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 10, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1887

*“My meditation of him shall be sweet.”
Psalm 104:34*

THOSE of you who were present this morning know that, with all my heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, I pleaded with men that they would come to Christ. [Sermon #1951, The Pleading of the Last Messenger] If ever in my life I felt that I had spent every particle of my strength, I did feel it when I had finished that discourse. I could have wished to die and end my ministry, with the testimony that I bore this morning. I know not in what way I could have more completely poured out my whole being in earnest desire for the conversion of my fellow men.

I thought that it would not be possible for me to handle another subject in anything like the same fashion tonight—I did not feel that I could do so. I said to myself, therefore, “Instead of preaching, instead of having anything to do that will cost much effort and cause much mental strain, I will just be one among the people and enjoy myself as a member of the congregation.

I will have a subject upon which we can all calmly think—I mean, all of us who know the Lord”—and it seemed to me as if nothing could be more fitting than to think of Him who is the joy of our heart, to meditate upon Him who is the strength of our spirit, even our blessed Lord, of whom the text says, “My meditation of *him* shall be sweet.”

So, then, I am not going to preach at this time, I am just going to lead your meditations a little, myself meditating while you also meditate, being a sort of a fugleman to pitch the tune in which, I trust, all who love the Lord will heartily join. May God the Holy Spirit help us all sweetly to meditate upon Him of whom the psalmist here speaks!

This one hundred and fourth Psalm is a very wonderful one. Humboldt wrote a book which he called *Cosmos*, that is, the world, and this Psalm is a *Cosmos*—it is a world set on fire with praise. It is all creation, from the mountain's summit down to the brooks that sparkle through the valleys praising God. I have frequently read this Psalm through in the woods and on the mountainside, and when we have come home from an excursion in the Italian mountains, I have said to my companions, “Now we will read the 104th Psalm.”

It is the naturalist's Psalm. It is the Psalm of nature viewed by the eye of faith, and he that learns to look aright on seas and mountains, on beasts and birds, on sun and moon and stars, sees God in all things, and says with the psalmist, “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

But beloved, redemption is a choicer theme for meditation than creation is, for its wonders are far greater. I can understand that God should make the worlds, but that He should redeem men from eternal ruin, I cannot understand. The Creator fashioning all things by the word of His power is nothing like so remarkable an object of meditation as that same Creator, veiled in human flesh, yielding His hands to the cross-nails and bowing His head beneath the stroke of death. If creation be marvelous, redemption is a sublimer miracle, a wonder in the very center of all wonders.

Nor is the theme of redemption less vast than that of creation. Truly, nature is a very wide theme, from the almost infinite greatness which is discovered through the telescope to the wonderful minuteness which is perceived through the microscope. Nature seems to have no boundaries, yet it is a

mere fragment compared with redemption, where everything is infinite, where you have to deal with sin and love, life and death, eternity and heaven and hell, God and man—and the Son of God made flesh for man’s sake. Now you are among the sublimities indeed—meditating upon redemption, your theme is vast beyond conception.

And let me add that the theme of redemption is quite as fresh as that of nature. Nature, it is true, never grows stale—from the first day of the year till the last, it is always young. Did you ever see the ocean look twice the same? Did you ever gaze upon the face of nature without always perceiving some fresh beauty? But it is just the same with redemption. The cross never grows old. The doctrine of Christ crucified is a spring that wells up forever with a sparkling freshness. Not even the eternal ages shall exhaust it, but when untold myriads of years have passed away, this old, old story of the cross will still be ever new.

There is this much more to say about a meditation upon redemption, that it comes closely home to us. I like to think of the stars, but after all, I can be happy if the stars are quenched. I delight to think of the rolling ocean, but still, I could rejoice if there were no more sea. But in redemption we have a vital and personal interest—we could not live as we now live, in the sight of God we could not truly live at all, if we had not been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

The seas and the starry worlds are not ours as blessedly as Christ is ours, and none of them can bring medicine to the heart and joy to the spirit as does Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us. So, I think I may say, however excellent the naturalist’s meditations are, and the more of right meditation upon nature the better—and I wish that we were all learned after the order of true science, which deals with nature itself and not with theories—yet, if you know little about these things in which some take so deep an interest, your meditations of God may be exceedingly sweet. If you stay within the boundaries of redemption through Jesus Christ, which are by no means narrow, you may say, “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

So, first, I shall talk about *the sweet*—“My meditation of him shall be sweet.” Then I shall speak of *the sweet as a sweetener*, for it is not only sweet in itself but it imparts sweetness—such sweetness as we need amid the many bitters of this mortal life.

I. First, then, let us talk about THE SWEET—“My meditation of him shall be sweet.” “Of him”—that is, of the Well-beloved of the Father, of the Well-beloved of the church, of the Well-beloved of my own soul—of Him who loved me, in whose blood I have washed my robes and made them white—it is meditation “of him” that is sweet—not merely of doctrine about Him, but of Him, of Himself—“my meditation of him.” Not merely of His offices, and His work, and all that concerns Him, but of His own dear self. There lies the sweetness and the closer we come to His blessed person, the more truly have we approached the very center of bliss.

Then it is “*meditation of him*” that makes the sweetness. Brethren, it is very delightful to hear about our Lord. I am sure that I have often been charmed when I have heard what others have had to say about Him. My hearing of Him is very sweet, but it does not say that in our text, it is, “my meditation of him.”

When I hear over and over again, in the echoes of my heart, what I have heard with my ears. When, like the cattle, having cropped the luscious food, I lie down, as they do, to ruminate and chew the cud, “my meditation of him shall be sweet.” To think over again what I have already thought of, to turn over and over in my soul truths with which I am happily familiar, which I have tasted and handled many times, and just to taste and handle them again—in doing so, “my meditation of him shall be sweet.”

The more we know of Christ, the more we want to know of Him. And the more sweet Christ is to us already, the more sweet He will be. We can never exhaust this gold mine—it gets richer, the deeper we dig into it. “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” I will not ask for the glowing periods of the orator, I will not wish for the profundities of the theologian. I will just sit down, humble as my mind may be, and think of what I have heard and known, and especially of all I have experienced of my Lord. And “my meditation of him shall be sweet.”

But let me dwell a minute on that first word—“*My meditation of him shall be sweet,*” Not another man’s meditation, which is afterwards related to me, but my own meditation of Him shall be sweet. Let me say, concerning the wine of communion with Christ, that it is never so sweet to a man as when he treads the grapes out himself—“*My meditation of him shall be sweet.*”

You get a text and beat out its meaning, “working your passage,” as we say, into the very soul of it. Then you will understand it and you will also enjoy it. Make meditation of Christ to be your own personal act and deed. Grasp Him for yourself and hold Him by the feet. Put your own finger into the prints of the nails and out of your own heart’s experience cry, “*My Lord and my God.*” Then you shall not need that I tell you how sweet such a meditation is, for you will be able to say for yourself, “*My meditation of him shall be sweet.*”

It does not signify, my dear friend, who you are, if you do but belong to Christ, your meditation of Him shall be sweet. You are a very poor and illiterate person, perhaps, but if you know Him, it shall be sweet to you to meditate upon Him. Or, it may be, you are a man of large reading and of wide knowledge. But I am quite sure that there is not in all the range of your reading anything for sweetness comparable to Him.

The science of Christ crucified leads the van of all the sciences. This is the most excellent of all knowledge, compared with which every other knowledge is but ignorance dressed in its best. “*My meditation of him shall be sweet*”—even mine as I stand here in the midst of you—and yours as you sit in those pews. And as you come presently to this table of communion, I hope each one who meditates on Christ will be able to say, “*My meditation of him shall be sweet.*”

Now let us meditate on Him for a few minutes, and first, *meditate upon His person.* This Blessed One, who is verily among us tonight, is God and man. Meditate upon His manhood. He is of a nature like your own. Sin alone excepted, He is a man as you are. Think of it and rejoice that He has so intense a sympathy with you and that you can have so intense a sympathy with Him.

He is your Brother, though He is also the Prince of the kings of the earth. He is your Husband, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, though He is also “over all, God blessed for ever.” Do not our hearts begin at once to warm towards the Man, Christ Jesus—in all our afflictions afflicted, in all our griefs a partaker—and shall not our meditation of Him be sweet?

But then He is also God, and as God, He has all dominion and authority in heaven and on earth. Think, then, how near has He brought us to the Godhead. There is now no division between a believing man and God—the Christ has bridged the chasm between the Creator and the creature. One might have thought that this gulf never could have been bridged. Between an angry God and a sinner, reconciliation may be made, but between a Creator and His creature, what link of union can there be? There could have been none if Christ had not become incarnate.

If God had not taken Manhood into union with Himself, we could never have been brought so near to God as we now are. Angels, you may stand back, you can never come so near the throne as man has come, for He was made a little lower than the angels, but now, in the person of Christ, He is set in the place of dominion and honor, and made to be master over all the works of God’s hands! My meditation upon the divine person of my blessed Master shall be sweet, shall it not? I do but indicate a long vista of delight, as it were. I open the gate, and say, “Go in there, friend, you shall find good food for meditation that way.”

Now let us *meditate upon our Lord’s life,* for this meditation also shall be sweet. Suppose I take the four Gospels and read the story of my blessed Master’s existence here among men. Well, it needs meditating on, for that life is much more than the evangelists could write. The life of Christ has a wonderful depth in it.

The other day I was reading aloud the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel and trying to expound it, and when I came to the close of my meditation, I said to myself, “If I were shut up to that one chapter for a whole lifetime, I could never expound all its depths.” That simple life of Christ, from Nazareth to

Golgotha, is a life of fathomless deeps. And the more you shall meditate upon it, the more sweetness shall you find in it.

Oh, to think of His fellowship with me if I am poor, for He hungered. His fellowship with me if I am weary, for He, “being weary, sat thus on the well.” His fellowship with me if I have to stand foot to foot with the old enemy, to contend even for my life. His fellowship with me if I lie in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, and have to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Read by the eye of faith, the whole story of the life of Christ is full of sweetness to the meditative mind, for remember that as He contended, He became a conqueror, and in this, too, we shall be like Him, for we shall overcome through His blood. Faith in Him will give us the victory—we shall tread Satan under our feet ere the battle is finished, even as He has done. My meditation of His woes, coupled with my meditation of His ultimate joys, shall be exceedingly sweet as a prophecy that, if I stoop, I too shall conquer—and though I be cast down, yet shall my casting down be but the means of lifting me up.

Now, here is another road for your thoughts to travel. “My meditation of him shall be sweet,” especially when *I meditate on His death*. The death of our Lord and Master should be the habitual theme of the meditation of God’s people. I am afraid that, in these days, we do not think enough of the cross and passion of our Divine Redeemer.

I read, in the “modern thought” papers and reviews, sneers about our “sensuous” hymns when we sing about our Lord upon the tree—and they would have us forbear to talk about His blood. Those expressions are “out of date.” It is “mediaeval” (I think that is the word) to set forth a dying Christ. Now, mark you, the strength of the Church of Rome over many minds has for centuries lain in the fact that she does keep prominent the facts of our Lord’s passion and death. Perverted as that truth about His cross often is, yet it has salvation in it—and I doubt not that many find their way to eternal life, even in that apostate church, by the fact that Christ crucified is made to be a great reality.

If it ever comes to pass among us who are called Protestants, and those who are called Protestant Dissenters, that the great fact of the death of Christ is to be regarded as a kind of myth, out of which certain recondite doctrines may be fetched, but which is not itself to be spoken of, we shall have cut the Achilles tendon of our strength, and our power to bless the sons of men will have departed.

Oh, give me the story of the cross, the veritable story! Yes, let my eyes behold the wounds of Jesus, as I stand and bow before the Crucified! His death was a literal fact—no phantom dream—and so would we hold it, and we would meditate upon it as the center of all our hopes.

“My meditation of him shall be sweet,” is especially true of Christ on Calvary’s cross. Here I see atonement completed, satisfaction rendered, justice honored, grace expounded, love struggling, bleeding, contending, conquering. In the actual death of Christ upon the cross, I see the safety of His elect whom He has purchased with His precious blood.

I see here the ending of the reign of evil, the bruising of the old serpent’s head. I see the great rock on which the kingdom of God is established upon a sure foundation sealed with the blood of Christ. Oh, go and live on Calvary, you saints! No better air is to be found beneath the cope of heaven and as you linger there, your meditation on your Lord shall be sweet.

But what am I saying? For wherever I contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, “my meditation of him shall be sweet.” Follow Him in *His resurrection*. Behold Him in *His present glory*. Meditate much upon *His intercession at the right hand of God*. How secure are we because He always lives to intercede for us! What prophecies of good things to come are hidden away in the person of our great High Priest before the throne.

Think, too, *of the glory yet to be revealed*. “Behold, he cometh.” Every hour is bringing Him nearer. We shall see Him in that day, and though we may fall asleep before He comes, yet at His coming He shall raise our bodies from the dust and in our flesh we shall see God. Let us meditate much upon the glories of Christ’s Second Advent, the transcendent splendors of our Divine Conqueror, the background of His sufferings only making His triumphs to shine the more brightly. Meditate upon these things—give your minds wholly to them—then shall you prove the sweetness which dwells in them all.

If you, who are children of God, do not feel that you could traverse any of these paths, I want you to seek to get sweetness out of this thought, “HE loves *me*.” Say to yourself, believer, “If there be never another one in heaven or on earth that loves me, yet Jesus loves me. Jesus loves *me*. It is well-nigh inconceivable, yet is it true.”

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject, THE SWEET AS A SWEETENER—“My meditation of him shall be sweet,”

That is to say, first, it *shall sweeten all my other sweetnesses*. I commend to you who are happy, to you who are full of joy, this blessed method of securing to yourselves a continuance of that happiness, and in such a manner as to prevent its cloying. If you have honey and your hands are full of it, be cautious how you eat of it, for you may eat honey till you are sick of it.

But if you have a great store of honey, put something sweeter than honey with it, and then it will not harm you. I mean, if God has given you joy in your youth, if you are prospered in business, if your house is full of happiness, if your children sing about you knee, if you have health and wealth, and your spirit dances with joy—all this, by itself may curdle and spoil. Add to it a sweet meditation of your Lord and all will be well, for it is safe to enjoy temporal things when we still more enjoy eternal things.

If you will put Christ upon the throne to rule over these good things of yours, then all shall be well. But if you do dethrone Him to set these things up—then they become idols—and “the idols he shall utterly abolish.” If you are truly His, you shall have great sorrow in the falling of your Dagon, but it shall surely come to pass.

O cheerful, happy, joyous people, I wish there were more of you. I am not condemning your joy—I would partake in it—but let the uppermost joy you have always be “Jesus Christ Himself.” If the occasion of joy is your marriage, ask Him to the wedding, for He will turn the water into wine. If it be your prosperity, ask Him to the harvest festival, and He will bless your storehouse, and your barn, and make your mercies to be real blessings to you.

But dear friends, I need not say much about this point, because at least to some of us, our very sweet days are not very long or very many. The comfort is that *this sweetness can sweeten all our bitters*. There was never yet a bitter in the cup of life but what a meditation upon Christ would overcome that bitterness and turn it into sweetness.

I will suppose that you are at this time undergoing personal trials of a temporal kind. There are a great many cures for the cares of this life which philosophy would suggest, but I suggest none of them to you—I prescribe meditation upon Christ. I have already given your many hints how the sorrows, the struggles, and the conquests of the life of Christ may help to sweeten all your conflicts and your struggles.

Half an hour’s communion with the Lord Jesus will take away the keenness of all your anxieties. Enter into your chamber, shut to the door, and begin to speak with the Man of Sorrows, and your own sorrows will soon be assuaged. If you are poor, get to Him who had not where to lay His head and you will even seem to be rich as you come back to your place in the world.

Have you been despised and rejected? Do but look on Him on whom men spat, whom they cast out, saying that it was not fit that He should live—and you will feel as if you never had true honor except when you were, for Christ’s sake, despised and dishonored. You will almost feel as if it was too great an honor for you to have been contemned for His dear sake, who bore the shame and the spitting and the cruel cross for your sake. Yes, the best sweetener of all temporal troubles is a meditation upon Christ Jesus our Lord.

So is it with all the troubles that come of your Christian work and service. I do not know how it is with any of my fellow workers here, but I can say this. My work has about it a joy that angels might envy, but at the same time, it has also a sorrow which I would not wish any to know if it stood by itself. To preach Christ, oh, what bliss it is! To tell of my Master’s sweet love and of His power to save the guilty, I would be content to stay out of heaven for seven ages if I might always be permitted to do nothing else but preach Christ to perishing sinners.

But there is the heartbreak which comes with it, often, in preparing to preach, lest haply one should not take the right subject, or should not have one's heart in a right condition for the handling of it. Add to that the anxieties that creep over one occupying such a position as mine. Standing where I stand tonight, and remembering many sorrowful histories, many disappointed hopes concerning the condition of many now before me, I go home sometimes wishing that I could creep into my bed and never come out of it again because of my terrible anguish over some of you who will, I fear, be eternally lost. As surely as you are here, you will be lost unless you turn to Christ.

Nothing seems as if it could save you—entreaties, invitations, warnings, prayers—all are in vain. You are still without God and without Christ—and if you remain so, you will be lost and we cannot bear the thought of it. We cannot endure to think that we should preach, and warn, and entreat, and invite, and yet that it should all end in nothing except that we should look from the right hand of the Great Judge and spy you out among those to whom He will say, “Depart from me, ye cursed!”

Truly, there is an awful heartbreak that comes to us when we think of these things. And when we see some, who did run well, turning aside, some who held the truth, decrying and denying that truth, some who once preached it, beginning to preach up the fancies of the age instead of the Gospel of all the ages, then our heart is indeed heavy.

But what then? “My meditation of *him* shall be sweet.” He is still the same God over all, blessed for evermore. He is still exalted a Prince and a Savior. Jesus will surely save His own and He will overthrow all His adversaries, for “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth.”

After all is said and done, there is no dishonor possible to Him. It is true that “He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” but finish the quotation, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name” (or, in the name) “of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” So, my meditation of Him, even amid the anxieties of Christian service, shall be exceedingly sweet.

Yes, beloved, and it is just the same when you come to the anxieties concerning your own spiritual condition. I suppose that the very good, “perfect” people we sometimes meet with, or hear of, never get into the state I sometimes get into, but I believe that many of you feel at times cast down and troubled about your own spiritual state.

Whether men laugh at it or not, I aver that many a child of God beside John Newton has had to say—

*“Tis a point I long to know,
Of it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”*

I venture to say that, as this was the question which the Lord Himself put to Peter, therefore it is not a wrong question for us to ask ourselves. When darkness veils the skies and the spirit sinks, and a sense of sin is more prevalent than the realization of divine grace, then it is bitterness indeed. And at such a time, the very best sweetener of the waters of Marah is to think of Christ—“My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

A sinner's Savior—oh, how sweet He is to such a sinner as I am! A Savior for those that have no strength—what a precious Savior He is to a weak one like myself! A Savior who, though we believe not as we ought, still abides faithful—what a dear Savior He is to a half-believing one who has to cry, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!”

Let me give you a little piece of advice—do not think of yourself, but think of your Lord. Or, if you must think of yourself, for every time you give an eye to self, give twice that time to Christ. Then shall your meditation of Him be sweet.

Thus, dear friends, as long as we live, and when we come to die, our meditation of Him shall be sweet. I would not have you fear the bitterness of death, any of you, if you are trusting in Jesus. God has a wonderful power of strengthening our souls when our bodies grow very weak and feeble.

I am quite sure that some of my dear friends were never before in such a condition in all their lives as I have seen them in when they have evidently been marked for death. The messenger has come, and as John Bunyan puts it, has brought some timely “token” to warn the spirit that, in a very short time, it is to appear among the shining ones at the right hand of God, and I have seen the spirit of the timid grow strangely brave and the spirit of the questioning grow singularly assured, just then.

The Lord has manifested Himself in an unusually gracious way to the poor fluttering heart. Just as the dove was about to take its last long flight, it seemed to have its eyes strengthened to see the place to which it must fly—and all timidity was gone forever. “My meditation of him shall be sweet.”

When I lie dying, when heart and flesh are failing me, when I shall have little else to think of but my Lord and the eternal state, then shall thoughts of Him pull up the floodgates of the river of bliss and let the very joy of heaven into my heart, and I shall be eager to be up and away. I shall not dread the pains, and groans, and dying strife of which some talk so much—but the sweetness of “my meditation of him” shall make me forget even the bitterness of death itself.

I have done when I have just given you one thought more. Our text might be read thus, “My meditation shall be sweet *to him*.” We are going to uncover the table of communion directly. You will have nothing to think of but the body and the blood of Him by whose death you live. That meditation will, I trust, be very sweet to you, but this fact ought to help to make it so—that it will be “sweet to him.”

Jesus loves you to love Him—and He loves you to think of Him. I know what you have said, sometimes. I remember a Christian woman saying to me, “I have often wished that I could preach, sir. I have often wished that I had but been a man that I might constantly preach the Gospel.” I do not wonder, I should marvel indeed if a good many Christian people did not say, “I wish that I could be a missionary,” or, “I wish that I could be a poetess, like Miss Havergal, and sweetly sing of Christ.” Perhaps you cannot do any of those things, but you can meditate on Christ, can you not? And your meditation on Him shall be sweet *to Him*. He will delight in your delighting in Him.

“Oh, but I am a nobody,” says one. “I am nothing.” I tell even you that your meditation of Christ, though it seems not to go very deep, though you cannot, perhaps, keep your thoughts well together, yet that heart-meditation of yours, which longs to meditate on your Lord and craves to know more of Him, is very sweet to Him.

Why, you fathers and mothers, you know how it is with those little ones of yours—and especially that first little one that just begins to talk! It has said nothing but nonsense at present, yet you respect the little words, do you not? It is a wonderful speech that little boy of yours made—but why do you think so much of your child’s little thoughts and expressions? Is it not because he is *your* child that you value his words so much?

Well now, you belong to Christ, and because you belong to Him, He accepts your meditations because He accepts you, and He takes a delight even in those poor broken perplexed thoughts of yours. He knows that if you could sing like the seraphim, you would do so. If you could serve Him as the angels do, you would. Well, if you cannot do that, you can at least meditate on Christ—and your meditation of Him shall be sweet to Him.

Oh, then, give Him much of it, and God bless you, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 104

I trust that we have already felt something of holy enjoyment while our hearts and voices have been praising the Lord our God. Perhaps this Psalm may help to keep us in a praising state of mind.

First of all, David sang of the majesty of God in his works. Then it seems as if the spirit of praise within him became like a strong-winged angel, and, mounting into the sky, he began to soar aloft over the varied landscapes of the world until the sun went down. And even then, he continued scudding along through the darkness till the sun arose again, and found him still praising his God. We will note, as we read the Psalm, this strange, mysterious flight of the spirit of praise.

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul.*

There is the key-note. Strike it, my brethren, each one of you!

1-3. *O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:*

Or as we may read it from the Hebrew, “who maketh his halls in the waters;” those mysterious waters above the firmament are here pictured as being the cool, retired dwelling-place of the awful Deity.

3. *Who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:*

A masterly picture, as if the Lord stood erect upon the two wings of the wind, and as if the wind, like a mighty spirit, went flying round the world, with the great JEHOVAH standing upon its wings and so riding along.

4-5. *Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.*

Now comes a very graphic description of Noah’s flood.

6. *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.*

What a splendid act of divine energy, when the waters which, before, like tamed lions, slept in their dens, came hungry and fierce, and swallowed up the whole earth!

7-8. *At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.*

At the sound of God’s voice, those mighty deeps went back in a great hurricane. Anyone who has seen water when it is traveling at a great rate, lashed with tempests, will have seen it tossed as into mountains, and then having huge holes like vast valleys in it. So, the waters rose up like mountains, and fell down like valleys, till they found the channels of the deep which God had founded for them.

9. *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.*

JEHOVAH puts the bit of sand into the mouth of the sea, and it comes no farther than its appointed bounds. Now you must suppose the psalmist is leaving the crowded streets, and the dingy, dusty, smoky haunts of men, and flying, on the wings of his gratitude and praise, away into the quiet of the fertile country.

10-12. *He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.*

I know of no place that seems to bring out one’s joy and praise better than when standing by the side of some rippling brook that tumbles down the fissure among the rocks, and seeing the animals come to drink, and hearing the birds blithely sing among the branches, or hang over and dip into the very stream. Even the reading of this Psalm may be like a cool and refreshing breeze to you at this time, and your soul may in imagination fly away with David, as you also praise and bless your God.

13. *He watereth the hills from his chambers:*

From those watery halls above the firmament He pours down the showers.

13-15. *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.*

The spirit of praise is flying over the fields ploughed and tilled by man, over the fruitful vineyards red with clusters of grapes, and over the olive gardens and other places where man's handiwork has made the earth fertile. Now the psalmist mounts still higher and gets into the woods.

16-17. *The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.*

Flying along over the tops of the trees, he looks down among them, and he notices the beasts as well as the birds

18. *The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.*

So that there is not any part of the earth which is not full of God's goodness—even the rocks, which yield nothing to the plough, furnish a refuge for the conies, and the high hills are a home for the wild goats, while the fertile earth beneath makes man's heart glad. As the spirit of praise flies over the tops of the mountains, the sun goes down. The psalmist witnesses that grand sight, an Eastern sunset.

19-20. *He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night:*

Will he cease from his song now? No, for God does not cease to work.

20-21. *Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.*

So that even night has its mysterious music, and the roaring of the young lions is a tribute to the providence of the good God who cares even for the beasts that perish.

22. *The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.*

You see, the psalmist does not cease his praise, but finds a theme for music even in the rest of the beasts.

23-24. *Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.*

The psalmist has made a long journey, flying along just where he could see everything upon the face of the earth, but he bethinks himself that he has not seen the half of God's works yet, for yonder is the Mediterranean, glistening in the morning sunbeams, so he takes another flight.

25-26. *So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships:*

That is, above the water; while in it—

26. *There is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.*

Some mighty fish leaps out of the sea. The psalmist's eye catches a glimpse of it, and he puts even that monster into his hymn of praise.

27. *These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.*

My brethren, what an idea we have here of God thus supplying all the creatures of the earth and the sea! They are all waiting upon Him. They can go to no other storehouse but His, no other granary can supply their needs. Surely, we need not be afraid that He will fail us. If He feeds leviathan with His great wants, and the many birds with their little wants, He will not forget His children. He will never withhold any real good from them that walk uprightly.

28. *That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*

That is all He has to do, you see, just to open His hand. If that hand were once fast closed, they would all die, but in order to supply the wants of all the creatures He has made, He has only just to open His hand.

29. *Thou hidest thy face,*

As if He did but put His hand before the brightness of His countenance,—

29-30. *They are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*

When God takes away the genial light of the summer's sun, what multitudes of creatures die, and then, when the soft breath of spring blows upon the earth, how soon the multitudes of insects come teeming forth! Christian, here is comfort for you! Has God withheld His Spirit from you for a little while, and have many of your joys and comforts fallen dead? He has only to speak and He can in a moment renew all your comforts.

31-35. *The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.*

It seems as if the spirit of praise had bred in the psalmist a spirit of indignation against sin, he could have no patience any longer with those who would not adore so great and so good a God, and therefore he utters this imprecation upon their heads, which is rather a prophecy of what will be their doom, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more."

35. *Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.*

Thus the psalmist, like a good musician, ends with the keynote of his song of praise, "Bless the LORD, O my soul." May each of us say the same!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—786, 785, 808

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