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“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”
Jeremiah 31:3

IT is said that when the stars cannot be seen, during the day, from the ordinary level of the earth, if one should go down into a deep well, they would be visible at once, and certainly, it is a fact that many of the brightest of God's promises are usually seen by His children when they are passing through some of their darkest experiences. As surely as God puts them into the furnace of affliction and trial, He will be with them in the furnace.

I do not read that Jacob ever saw the angel of the Lord until that night when, by the brook Jabbok, “there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day,” but then, the wrestling Jacob met the wrestling angel foot to foot. I do not know that Joshua ever saw the “Captain of the Lord's host” until, outside the walls of Jericho, his Divine Leader appeared to him. I do not know that Abraham ever saw the Lord until, as a stranger in the plains of Mamre, He manifested Himself to His servant in the form of a traveler and His friends needing hospitality and refreshment.

It is in our most desperate straits that we often have our most joyous revelations. John must go to “the isle that is called Patmos” before he could have the wondrous Revelation that was there given to him, it was only on that barren, storm-girt rock, shut out from the world's light, that he could find the fitting darkness in which to view the glory of heaven undistracted by the shadows of earth.

The message of our text was given to Jeremiah in a time of deep distress, it was meant to be helpful to the Lord's people in their greatest desolations. That being the case, we may use it in a threefold manner, and view it first as *an answer to many complaints*, secondly, *as teaching some exceedingly valuable doctrines*, and thirdly, *as a stimulant to self-examination as to our state before God*.

I. First then, our text may be viewed as AN ANSWER TO MANY COMPLAINTS.

If you look at your Bibles, you will see that the word “saying” is in italics, showing that it is not in the original, and has been supplied by the translators. Sometimes, they have inserted words which have really brought out the meaning more clearly, but in this case, if I understand the passage, they have rather obscured the sense.

The fact is, the first sentence is a complaint on the part of Israel. In the previous verse, God had said, “The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.” “Ah!” said Israel, “but that was centuries ago, ‘the Lord hath appeared of old unto me.’” There was a note of complaint even in the expression of gratitude, as much as to say, “Times are changed, for the Lord does not appear unto me now.”

The complaint was that His choice revelations and wondrous deliverances were all in the ages long ago, but the Lord's answer was, in effect, “It is true that these revelations and deliverances were in the past, but they are designed to yield you present comfort, for they prove that I have loved you with an ancient love, and since I am immutable, you may omit the word ancient, and insert everlasting: ‘Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.’”

Then to complete the answer, the Lord avers that even in Israel's present time of mourning, He had manifested His lovingkindness. He seems to say, “Is not that as much as ever I did? Talk of all the

wonders that I wrought in the days gone by, when I cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon—this is a still greater wonder, that I have drawn you with lovingkindness. Say not that the former times were better than these, say not that the wonder working power of God is exhausted. I loved you of old, but I also love you today, and I have proved it by drawing you with the bands of My love. This is as great a miracle, as high a privilege, and as sure a sign of My love to you as anything I did in the olden days.”

Now, brothers and sisters, is not this our complaint sometimes, that we read in the Bible of what God did of old, but we see nothing like that nowadays? Indeed, some people think that although there were wonders in those ancient times, the oracle has long ceased to speak.

I daresay you have heard of the poor ignorant woman, who, on being told by her minister about the crucifixion of Christ, said, “Well, well, sir, if it was so, it happened a long while ago, and a great way off, but let us hope the story is not true.” I address some people, not quite so ignorant as that woman, who, nevertheless, when I preach about the wonders God has wrought, say, “Well, sir, those things happened long ago, and a great way off, but it is not at all probable that God would do anything like that now.” What! do you think that His arm is waxed short, or that His hands have become powerless, so that He is not now able to help His people as He did in the ages gone by? This is the complaint of many, perhaps they do not put it into words, but this is what they often say in their heart.

What is God’s answer to this complaint? Let each believer hear Him say, “I have done for you as great wonders as I ever did for Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. I have wrought for you miracles as matchless as when I brought Israel up out of Egypt, or led the chosen nation through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. Did I bring them up out of Egypt? Have I not brought you up out of the dominion of sin? Did I break the power of Pharaoh? Have I not crushed the might of Satan? Did I divide the Red Sea for Israel to pass over? Have I not made a pathway for you, through many a tumultuous sea, so that you have gone over dry shod? Did I feed the people with manna in the wilderness, and have I not fed you—not with bread alone, but also with the words which have come forth out of My mouth? Did I cause Moses to lift up the brazen serpent, that they might be healed when they were bitten by the serpents, and have I not lifted up the Son of man, that whosoever looketh unto Him may be cured of the serpent-bite of sin? Did I bring them into Canaan, and give them rest, and have I not said to you, ‘There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God’? Did I drive out the Canaanite before them, and give them possession of the land, and have I not driven out your sins, and will I not, by My Spirit, purify and cleanse your whole life? Did I give them prophets after my own heart, and have I not given you shepherds who have fed you with knowledge and with understanding? Did I give to them, at last, King David to sit upon his throne, and have I not given to you great David’s greater Son and Lord, to be the King of your heart, and to rule over your entire being? Did I give them Solomon, and a temple, and riches and glory, and have I not promised to you heaven, and greater riches, and glories, and splendors than anything I ever gave to him when he ruled over Israel?”

I feel sure that if you will look into it carefully, your own experience will prove to be far more wonderful than anything which God did of old, so that you will have no reason to say, “The LORD appeared of old unto our fathers, but he is not now with their children.” We are apt sometimes, to think that natural miracles are greater than spiritual ones, for instance, that the dividing of the Red Sea as recorded in the Book of Exodus, is a greater miracle than the forgiving of sins, as recorded in the Gospels, but if you will weigh these two things in the balances of the sanctuary, you will at once see that the spiritual miracle is infinitely greater than the natural one.

It is an easy thing to shut the mouths of ordinary lions, but it is a great deal more difficult to shut the mouth of the roaring lion of hell, which goes about seeking whom he may devour. It is a very simple matter for the omnipotent God to make a world—He speaks and it is done—but to remake an innumerable company of His creatures, who have become debased, and spiritually dead—this is, indeed, a work only comparable to that which He accomplished when He “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

God made the world without any suffering, but He could not redeem even one soul without agonies unknown. At the close of the six days work of creation, God could say of everything that He had made, that it was very good, but on the cross, the Savior could not say, "It is finished," until His very heart had been broken with anguish and reproach. God could rejoice over the works of His hands, and His delights could be with the sons of men, but after man had fallen, God could not lift him up again without sighs, and groans, and bloody sweat—yea, death itself, the death of deaths, "the death of the cross."

Therefore, let none of us, in these days say that the former times were better than the present ones, or that God has ceased to perform His mighty works. He has done as much for us as He ever did for our fathers, so let us praise and bless His holy name, and laud and magnify His deeds of grace.

We, as a church, perhaps, are apt to think that we must not expect great things from God in these times. Why not—I pray—why not? Did not God give tongues of fire, and send His apostles forth to preach the Word to the people of every clime under heaven, and is it not a fact that, within a hundred years of Christ's death, His Gospel had been proclaimed through all the then known world? And is it not possible that from this time forth the church of Christ may take great strides like a giant, instead of creeping like a snail? Why may not the army of the cross march onward—

"From victory unto victory,"—

instead of being so frequently repulsed? Is the church of Christ always to be like a little stream, in which you may see the pebbles lie? No, let her be like Kishon, the mighty torrent that swept away the hosts of Sisera and Jabin, and let her carry off the legions of darkness into the depths of despair. Let God but arise in His might, and wondrous works, such as He did in the days of Huss, and Luther, and Calvin, shall be done again. The thunder-claps of Whitefield and Wesley shall reverberate again. God can make all His ministers to be flames of fire if He so pleases. He can once more arouse His church, scatter all her foes before her, and enrich her with the spoils of the holy war.

We have not fallen upon evil days, beloved. *We* may be feeble, but our God is not. The light may be dim just now, but the sun is not dim. What if the winds do not always blow with hurricane force? They are but slumbering for a while, and will awake with all their wonted vigor, and drive the chariots of the sky at resistless speed.

What if the ocean should seem just now, to be sleeping in its briny bed? Before long, it will respond to the psalmist's invitation, "Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof." If the stars should be, for a little while, hidden from your gaze, they will soon pierce through the darkness, and once again, shall you behold those eyes of heaven peering down in mercy upon you. God can speedily renew to you all the manifestations of His presence.

Ebbs shall be followed by floods, winters by summers, and our present indications of a state of death shall give place to signs and tokens of a glorious life. Say not, complainingly, O church of God, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me," but rather rejoice and revel in His comforting assurance, "Yea, I did appear of old unto you, for 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.'"

I have thus explained how I believe our text was intended to be used.

II. Now we will look at it as TEACHING SOME EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE DOCTRINES.

And first, I believe that it teaches us *the doctrine of effectual calling*, "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." No one ever does come to the Lord unless the Lord Himself draws him, he cannot come, and he will not come.

Christ said to the murmuring Jews, "No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and to those who sought to kill Him, because of His miracles on the Sabbath day, He said, "Ye *will* not come to me, that ye might have life." That is the sternest blow against free-will of which I know, what a free-willer can make out of that text, I cannot tell. He says that any man can come to Christ, yet Christ said to some, "Ye will not come to me," and both observation and experience prove

that this is still true. Never yet did a soul come to Christ till first Christ came to it. There are some, who think that the doctrine of effectual calling means that God forces men to repent and believe against their wills—a more absurd and unscriptural notion than that could hardly be mentioned. God does not drag men to heaven by the hair of their heads. There is a wide difference between physical force and spiritual force. God does not save an unwilling man, but He makes him willing in the day of His power.

We may not be able to explain all about this great mystery, yet we may firmly believe—in full accordance with the laws which regulate human minds, and without at all violating the free agency of His creatures—that God knows how to persuade men, ay, and how sweetly to “compel them to come in,” that His house may be filled. There is a sort of compulsion, you know, which one exercises by argument. The force of logic, or the spell of eloquence, we all acknowledge. In this way, the understanding is overwhelmed.

The mind at first resists and says, “I will not do such and such,” but you bring argument after argument to bear upon it until, at last, it yields and says, “I am compelled to do it,” yet it acts willingly, freely, and not without pleasure. The understanding has been enlightened, that acts upon the rest of the powers of the mind, and thus the man is influenced, we may even say compelled, without any violation of the fact that he is free.

So, the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, by bringing the truth to the mind, and through that truth, leads the soul to see certain consequences that follow from it, then, the understanding being enlightened, the soul, with full consent, comes to Christ. The Holy Spirit does what you and I cannot do, for He acts directly upon the will. We cannot do that except by physical force, and even then, the will is not really changed, for if a man resolves that he will not do a certain thing, but you afterwards compel him to do it, I question if his will is actually conquered.

But the Holy Spirit knows how to apprehend “My Lord Will-be-will”—as Bunyan calls him—put him in irons, and lead him away captive. There is still the will, but I can hardly say that it is put into fetters, for it was in fetters before, but it is so changed and assimilated to the will of God, that it is really free in its love of holiness. It seemed to be free before, but it was a slave to evil passions. Free-will is a slave by nature, but when Christ comes, and (as some would say), fetters it with the golden chains of love, then the will becomes free indeed.

Thus I have shown you how the Holy Spirit acts upon the will, and He can also act upon the heart, which is, perhaps, an even more important part of the man. When a man truly loves any object, he is always willing to do anything in furtherance of that objective, and so, when the Holy Spirit shows to the mind’s eye the beauties of Christ, His sufficiency, and adaptation to the needs of the soul, the heart begins to love Christ. Where the heart goes, the will must follow, especially if it is led by “My Lord Understanding, the Lord Mayor of Mansoul,” according to Bunyan’s “Holy War.”

So, though no soul ever comes to Christ without being drawn to Him, yet let it always be understood that such drawing is in perfect accordance with the laws which govern human minds, and that the Spirit of God thus acts without, in the least degree, violating the freedom which God has given to men.

The text says that God draws His people “with lovingkindness.” Yet it is quite certain that the Holy Spirit makes use of the law of the Lord in drawing men to Christ and salvation. The thunders of the law, the terrors of judgment, the stings of conscience, and the pangs of death are all employed for this purpose, but they are all tempered and softened by the lovingkindness of the Lord. In every instance you will find that it is His lovingkindness that gives the finishing stroke, even with those who are driven to Christ by that stern pedagogue, the law.

The prodigal set out for his father’s house from a sense of need, “but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,” so that the last steps he took towards his father’s house, were taken with those kisses still warm upon his cheek, and His father’s welcome still music in his ears. Rightly do we sing—

“Law and terrors do but harden

*All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."*

And when that sense of blood-bought pardon comes to the heart, the law's thunders are all hushed, and the heart is won for God. The Master came one night to the door of a man's heart, and knocked on it with the mailed gloves of the law upon His hands, the door creaked and shook, but it did not open, and the man put up against it all the furniture he could find, to keep it from opening, crying all the while, "I will never be forced to yield."

So the Master turned away, for a time, but by and by, He came back, and with His own soft hand, using most that part where the nail had penetrated, He knocked again, oh, so softly and tenderly! This time the door did not shake, but strange to say, it opened, and there, upon his knees, the once unwilling host, was found, waiting to welcome his Divine Guest. He said to Him, "Come in, come in, you have knocked in such a way that I can no longer resist You. I could not think of Your pierced hand leaving its bloody mark upon my door, and then of Your going away homeless, Your head filled with dew, and Your locks with the drops of the night. Come in, come in, you have won my heart, and I yield to You, You blessed Lord and Savior."

It is so, I believe, in every case, lovingkindness wins the day. What Moses could not do with his hammer, Christ does with His cross. What Moses, with the two tablets of stone, could never do, Christ does with one touch of the finger of His mercy.

This is the doctrine of effectual calling as I see it in the text. Do you all understand it experientially? Can each one of you say with Dr. Doddridge—

*"He drew me, and I follow'd on,
Charm'd to confess the voice divine"?*

If so, may He continue to draw you until, at last, He shall draw you from earth to heaven, and you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, to go no more out forever.

I see also in the text *the doctrine of eternal love*. Why has the Lord drawn His people to Himself? Because He loved them "with an everlasting love." To some good people, the word "election" sounds almost like blasphemy. If "predestination" is mentioned, they think it is something dreadful. Yet that doctrine is in the text, and you cannot get the idea of "predestination" away from the word "everlasting."

The reason, and the only reason, why any man is ever drawn out from the world, and brought to Christ, is to be found in the eternal love of God. There is nothing more, naturally, in that man than in any other man, indeed in many cases, he is worse than others. If salvation had been the reward of merit, he would have been left out.

There is by nature, nothing in man to win the heart of Christ. What form, what comeliness is there in human nature in His sight? Shall blackness win the heart of Him who is without blemish and without spot? Shall loathsome leprosy be attractive to the Divine Being? Shall deformity so charm the eyes of JEHOVAH that He shall love it? It cannot be, the only reason for God's love to us is that He *will* love us. From that fountain of His own dateless love springs our effectual calling, and everything else that comes to us.

Let us pause awhile, and meditate upon this everlasting love. Let every believer in Jesus think upon it to his own comfort. There are many old things in the world, we like to see old castles, old abbeys, and old ruins, but long before those castles and abbeys were built, Christ Jesus had proved His love to us by redeeming us from our sins by shedding His precious blood for us on Calvary's cross.

We delight to travel in foreign countries, and to see the remains of old Rome, or the pyramids of Egypt, or other wonders of the world, but long before any of those stupendous structures were piled, God had declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the old serpent's head.

It is delightful to go back in thought, to the time when the hills were born—when the hoary Alp was yet an infant, and when the aged ocean was but a babe, sporting in its newborn existence, and clapping its hands in its early glee, but if you go back as far as that, you have not begun to get anywhere near the time when God, in covenant with Christ, gave to Him a people, and promised that they should be His forever and ever.

Scientific men love to go back to the most remote geological periods, to those ages before man was created, when those various deposits of shells, and bones, and other materials, were made, which are gradually being discovered, but you must go further back than that, yea, you must go back beyond the very first creative act of God, and even then you will not have reached that period of which the psalmist says, “The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.”

Fly back, in imagination, if you can, to the time when the un navigated ether had never been disturbed by the wing of cherub, and when the song of the seraphim had never startled the silence of the infinite, go back to the time when God dwelt alone, and you have only then begun to approach that mysterious eternity when God loved His people “with an everlasting love.”

This wondrous love, too, was from eternity fixed upon such a worm as I am, and such worms as you are beloved. What a marvel it is that the Eternal should ever have deigned to think upon me, or upon you, my brother, my sister! Try to grasp it if you can, though it is one of those things which only “expressive silence” can set forth. “HE loved *me*—from everlasting!” Feed on this glorious truth, O Christian, and recollect that your being drawn to Christ is the effect of this eternal love, and is, at the same time, the proof of it—the proof that you were upon God’s heart long before He—

*“Spread the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies.”*

Read the text another way and it will teach us a third doctrine. *The word “everlasting” looks not only backward, but forward.* “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” that is to say, “I have drawn you because I intend to save you to everlasting. I would not have called you by My grace if I had meant to ever leave you to perish. I would not have begun the good work in your soul, by drawing you with lovingkindness, if I had not intended to bring you to My glory at the last.”

O beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, love without beginning is indeed sweet, but there is a still more luscious sweetness in love without end! It will do us good to dilate a little upon this wondrous truth, nor shall we need to draw much upon our imagination in doing so. I can readily picture the time when this dark hair of mine shall be silvered over with grey, and the sunlight of heaven shall begin to whiten my brow, ay, but God’s promise is, “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

It needs no great stretch of the imagination to look forward to the time when the old man will have to lean upon his staff, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the grasshopper shall be a burden. Perhaps it will be the lot of some of us young people to grow old together, if so, may we grow ripe as we grow old!

But if we are the Lord’s people, we shall be able each one, to say as infirmities increase upon us, “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” Then we look forward to that silent chamber, where friends will stand by our bed, and whisper, “He cannot last long now.” Whether we shall hear them say it or not, we cannot tell, but “we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Now the last moment comes, the death sweat is on our brow, the death rattle is in our throat, yet David’s words are fulfilled in our experience, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Now my soul has stretched her wings, she has left mortality behind, to—

“Soar through tracks unknown;”—

but still she sings—

*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”*

In due time will come the great day of judgment, but—

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay?
While through Thy blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

Now the drama of Time is finished. Eternity has come, and we shall be “forever with the LORD.” The sun has spent its fire, the moon has paled its feeble light, the elements have been burned up with fervent heat, the stars have shut their eyes in eternal blindness, and the universe dissolves as the billow’s foam sinks into the wave that bears it, but still, our Lord’s words describe the joy of His people, “the righteous into life eternal.” Oh, that precious, everlasting love of God, always ours, because with lovingkindness He has drawn us!

There is a thief, over there, who wants to steal away this doctrine from me. He has been borrowing the old-fashioned burglarious instruments of dead men—the pick-locks of Arminius, and the center-bits of Mr. Wesley—a good man, but one who was on a bad errand when he tried to take this choice and comfortable doctrine from the children of God. Yet I do not care what any of them may say or do, “for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If we are in Christ, there is one thing which should make us feel very safe, if anything could ever divide us from the love of Christ, we would have been divided long ago. Suppose that our troubles could do it, then it would have been done long since, for we have had a sea full of them already. Yet, in six troubles, the Lord has been with us, and in seven, He has not forsaken us. Suppose that sin could do it, then, brethren, it would have been done in the first hour after our conversion. I must certainly make my sorrowful confession—

*“If ever it could come to pass
That God’s own child should fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day.”*

If the Lord had ever meant us to fall into hell, we should have gone there years ago.

“But,” say some, “perhaps we may meet with strong temptations.” Yes, probably we shall, but we shall never meet with a temptation stronger than the arm of God can enable us to overcome. Others say, “But perhaps we may backslide.” Yes, I know we may, but if we do, the Lord will say to us, even then, “Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you.”

Yet others say, “But perhaps we may make the Lord angry with us.” Yes, I know we may, but I also remember how He pleaded with those who did so in the olden day, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.”

This is a question about which we need not dispute here, for I do not suppose that there is one member of this church who ever entertains a doubt about the truth of this doctrine. We sing, over and over again—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine;”—*

and we delight to repeat that confident assurance of Toplady, whose own end was so joyous because of his enjoyment of this precious truth—

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

III. I was to have concluded my discourse by considering our text as A STIMULANT TO SELF-EXAMINATION AS TO OUR STATE BEFORE GOD, but our time has gone, so I can only ask this all-important question—Men and brethren, have you any part and lot in these things of which I have been speaking? Are you the objects of eternal love?

“That is just what I should like to know,” says one, “can you tell me?” Well, I cannot climb to heaven to read the roll of the redeemed, nor can I tell you of a way to go up Jacob’s ladder to read it for yourself, but there is a way of knowing whether God loved you before He made the world, and whether He will love you after the world has ceased to be.

It is this—has He drawn you with His lovingkindness? Examine your hearts and see. Have you felt your need of Jesus? Has that need constrained you to pray to Him? Has that prayer been answered by your being enabled to put your trust in Him? Have you been drawn away from the confidence in which you once boasted? Have you been drawn away from the love of your old sin? Have you—to sum up all—been made a new creature in Christ Jesus?

Then, never doubt your election, and never doubt your glorification. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them He also glorified.”

What are you doing, Mr. Unbelief? You are trying to separate glorification from calling, but you can never do it, for God has joined them together so securely that neither death nor hell can break the bond that unites them, “whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” May we all be there, among the heavenly birds of paradise—

*“And vie with Gabriel while he sings,
In notes almost divine;”—*

of love without beginning and of favor without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 60

The subject of this chapter is “The glory of the church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction.”

Verse 1. *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*

The church is like the moon, which shines with borrowed light. When God shines upon the church, then the church herself shines by reflecting His light. The glory of JEHOVAH is her glory, if that be withdrawn, she is dark indeed, but when that shines into her, and through her, then her brightness is great indeed.

2-3. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

There is nothing that breaks the darkness except the light from God's own face, and when that falls upon the church, then the church straightway begins to shine in the midst of the darkness, and multitudes come to the light, and even the great ones of the earth, the kings, come to the brightness of her rising.

4. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.*

There is no sign here of the church of God being deserted, on the contrary, she shall become, through the grace of God, the center of attraction. Men shall come from distant lands to her, however far removed they were, they shall still come, "thy sons shall come from far." She shall also be increased by the accession of those near at hand, "and thy daughters shall be nursed at your side."

5. *Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

Oh that we might live to see this happy day, when we shall feel a holy awe because of God's glory as revealed in His church! This fear is not a servile dread, but a holy awe of God, and then the heart shall be enlarged, we shall deal with great things, wish for great things, attempt great things, do great things, and see great things. "Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged," for the sailor far away upon the sea, and the whole strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee.

6-7. *The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

These people had mostly been followers of false prophets, but they too shall forsake their fanaticism and their bigotry, and come to unite with the church of God. Those least likely and furthest off from hope, shall be brought in by the sovereign grace of God.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

The church is astonished, she asks, "Who can they be?"

9-10. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls; and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

The church of God is one continuously. At first it was a Jewish church, and it has never ceased to comprise within its bounds some members of the chosen race. But now, in these latter days, she has broken the narrow bonds of race, and from Tarshish, and the distant isles of the sea, multitudes are already coming to the church of God, and they shall come much more numerous in the years that have not yet arrived.

11-14. *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee;*

Or if they do not themselves come, their children shall, each generation shall include a remnant according to the election of grace, and in due time, shall come the great ingathering.

14-22. *And all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breasts of kings: and*

thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

“Amen! Amen!” so say we, with all our heart.

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