

THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN

NO. 880

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1869
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter,
in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”*
Jeremiah 5:24

SUCH are the climate and soil of Palestine that all agricultural operations are most manifestly dependent upon the periodical rainfall. Hence the people speak of the weather and the crops with a more immediate reference to God than is usual with us. It is said that the common expressions of the peasantry are such as quite strike travelers with their apparently devout recognition of the Almighty agency.

Certainly we may account for a very large number of what may be called the agricultural promises of the Old Testament, from the fact that little of the food of the people was gained by manufacture or commerce, and the whole population depended upon the field, and the field upon the rain.

Palestine is the very opposite of Egypt, which is so well-irrigated by its river. And it is equally different from our own land, in which seasons of comparative drought may yet prove to be years of plenty. In Palestine, the agriculturalist must have the rain. He must receive the first rain soon after the corn is put into the ground, otherwise it will rot or be blown away with the dust, as his fields become turned into a kind of impalpable powder by the summer's sun.

He must have the latter rain just before the time of harvest, otherwise the ears lacking the moisture that should fill them out, will become thin and lean, barely worth the ingathering—in fact, they will yield no flour for the food of man. The husbandman depends entirely upon the early and the latter rain, and if these do not fall pretty plenteously in their season, a time of famine will ensue.

Although our climate does not so immediately remind us of our dependence upon God, yet it would be well if we remembered whence all our blessings come, and look up to the hand from which our daily bread is distributed. In these herbless miles of pavement, these dreary wildernesses of brick, we scarcely perceive the lapse of the seasons.

In vain for us the violet of spring sheds its perfume, or the last rose of summer blushes with beauty, seed time and harvest come and go all unobserved—yet are citizens and merchants as much dependent upon the fruit of the field as the swains who reap and mow. Therefore let us lift up our eyes to the Lord who gives rain and in so doing drops bread from heaven.

When He gives seasons propitious for the harvest, let us thank Him for it. And if at any time He restrains the blessings of the elements, and loads the air with blight and mildew, let us fear and tremble before Him and humble ourselves before His chastening hand.

*“The harvest-song we would repeat;
Thou givest us the finest wheat;
The joys of harvest we have known;
The praise, O Lord, is all Thine own.”*

Gratitude for providential mercies is not, however, the subject of this morning's discourse. I intend to use the text rather in a spiritual sense. As it is in the outward world, so is it in the inward. As it is in

the physical, so is it in the spiritual. Man is a microcosm, a little world, and all weather and seasons find their image in him.

The earth is dependent upon the rain shower from heaven, so are the souls of men, and so are their holy works dependent upon the grace shower which comes from the great Father of light, the giver of every good and perfect gift. A famine would surely follow in the East if the rain were withheld, so would spiritual disasters of the worse kind be sure to ensue if the grace of God were restrained.

We shall consider this great truth in its bearing upon two important matters—first, as it respects the work of God which we carry on *without* us. And secondly, as it respects the work of God as it is carried on *within* us.

I. First, then, THE WORK OF GOD AS IT IS CARRIED ON WITHOUT.

It is needful, whenever any holy enterprise is commenced, that it should be early watered by the helpful Spirit of God. Nothing begins well unless it begins in God. It cannot take root, it cannot spring up in hopefulness, except the Holy Spirit shall descend upon it. It will wither like the grass upon the housetops if the celestial dew of the morning falls not early upon it.

The like grace is equally needful after years of growth. There is urgent need of the latter rain, the shower of revival, in which the old work shall be freshened and the first verdure shall be restored. For without this latter rain, the period of harvest, which is the end aimed at, will be disappointing.

My brethren and sisters, members of this church, it will make my discourse more practical if I apply it to the church of which we are members. You who are members of other churches can readily, in a like case, apply the truth to your spiritual homes.

Years ago we were minished and brought low, dark was the hour and pale were the faces. The numbers who gathered for sacred worship in connection with this church might almost be counted upon the fingers. Our Zion was all but utterly forsaken. Yet there was a living band of men whose hearts the Lord had touched, who ceased not to pray day and night that He would be pleased to remember us.

To these entreaties heaven sent a gracious answer, and now for these sixteen years God has been pleased to look in mercy upon us as a church and congregation, and in continued prosperity we have rejoiced day by day.

Many of you are the fruits this day of the blessing which came to us in the first years of the early rain. How soon the congregations were multiplied. Place after place was found to be too strait for us—still the blessing of God was with us and multitudes thronged to hear the Word! Blessed be His name, we had not only hearers, but we had converts.

We heard on every side the cry of repenting sinners, and multitudes said, “What must we do to be saved?” Our church grew exceedingly, so that we realized the blessing of the apostolic times, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” We were as wet as Gideon’s fleece with the dew of heaven.

And what prayers we then put up! Have we not been present some of us in prayer meetings when we were all moved by the breath of God’s Spirit, as the growing wheat is moved by the wind? How often were our souls within us bowed to the very dust in admiring wonder to see how the Lord wrought!

As we saw the crowds, we stood still and cried in amazement, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” Then, being baptized of the Holy Ghost, we walked together in holy unity of love, in earnestness of endeavor, in the generosity which spared no expense for Christ, in the love which thought no evil, in the zeal which dared all things, in the courage that defied opposition. Our graces flourished, and our communion was sweet and unbroken.

And now, as pastor of this church, having seen what God has done for us, I can gratefully add, “The Lord has not withdrawn His hand, lo, these well-nigh sixteen years, from our midst.” Conversions have never become less numerous. There has been, so far as I can judge, little or no flagging in the earnestness of your endeavors, and though more might have been done, and should have been done, yet still for what has been done let God have all the praise.

But my fear is—a fear which haunts me often, a fear which springs, I trust, out of zeal for God’s glory, lest having had the early rain we should become contented to forego the latter rain. But ah! this must not be. Let any church dream that it is established by the lapse of years and can stand alone, because of its acquired strength, let it imagine that prayer need not be so humble and vehement, let it conceive that its ministry has in it a natural power which must ensure its efficiency, let it conceive that its membership has become so influential that it can support its own work, let it in any respect rely upon an arm of flesh, its hour of peril is come, and the day of its downfall is near at hand.

Let not the church say, “We have done enough.” Let it not boast that it has reached the *Ultima Thule* of industry and liberality. The end of progress is come when we have reached self-contentment. When we glory in the multitude of goods laid up for many years, we are already naked, and poor, and miserable.

I, therefore, beseech my brethren and sisters joined with me in church fellowship here, to earnestly entreat that we now may have the latter rain as we aforesaid received the early rain. May renewed grace be to us a token that the God who blessed us in the past has not turned away from doing us good. We have the unconverted in our midst, they sit by our side in these pews. We need grace for these.

A number of our hearers who were unconverted fifteen years ago are still with us, and yet not of us. Alas! in that space of time a large number have passed into eternity unsaved. The crowds still gather to listen to the Word, and we want still the blessing upon the preacher in delivering and the people in hearing the truth. We cannot do without it.

O members of this church, let no man take our crown. The crown of this church has been the souls converted unto God by the Holy Spirit in this place. Let us struggle to retain this crown, let us incessantly pray that instead of losing this glory, we may increase in it to the glory of God.

I know not how to speak to you for the very reason that I would speak infinitely better than I can, for it seems to me that if God should leave us, our own sadness and our own shame will be the least part of the evil. For those who have watched our growth and been encouraged in similar efforts will be discouraged, and the kingdom of the Master will in that measure decline. Others of His servants will hang their harps upon the willows, and return to that dull, dead, cold monotony, long so common to our churches.

My brethren, you began the battle well. You rushed to the encounter and swept all before you. Servants of the living God, the day is hot and long, the struggle still continues, the enemy still hold the ground—can you keep your line, can you stand in your phalanx, can you endure to the end, and march on with still greater ardor to the fray until the field is won, and the shout goes up that the King eternal, immortal, has won the victory?

Thus in connection with any one church. The same is true in connection with any sphere of labor in which any individual among us may happen to be engaged. I will trust that every believer here has found something to do for his Lord and Master. In commencing any Christian work, novelty greatly assists enthusiasm and it is very natural that under first impulses the beginner should achieve an easy success.

The difficulty of the Christian is very seldom the commencement of the work. The true labor lies in the perseverance which alone can win the victory. I address some Christians here who have now been for years occupied with a service which the Holy Ghost laid upon them. I would remind them of the early rain of their youthful labors, the moisture of which still lingers on their memories, although it has been succeeded by long years of drought.

Brethren, be encouraged. A latter rain is yet possible. Seek it. That you need it so much is a cause for sorrow, but if you really feel your need of it, be glad that the Lord works in you such sacred desires. If you did not feel a need for more grace, it would be a reason for alarm. But to be conscious that all that God did by you in the past has not qualified you to do anything without Him now, to feel that you lean entirely upon His strength now as much as ever, is to be in a condition in which it shall be right and proper for God to bless you abundantly.

Wait upon Him then, for the latter rain. Ask that if He has given you a little of blessing in past years, He would return and give you ten times as much now, even now. So that, at the last, if you have sown in tears, you may come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

Alas! the danger of every Christian worker is that of falling into routine and self-sufficiency. We are most apt to do what we have been accustomed to do and to do it half asleep. One of the hardest tasks in all the world is to keep the Christian awake on the enchanted ground. The tendencies of this present time, and of all times, are soporific. The life, the power of our public services and private devotion speedily evaporates. We pray as in a dream, and praise and preach like somnambulists.

May God be pleased to stir us up, to awaken and quicken us by sending us the latter rain to refresh His weary heritage. Thus much upon the first point.

II. Let us turn to the second, which will more concern each one of us and come closer home to our hearts. Spirit of God, help us in dispensing Your truth. We shall apply the text to OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WITHIN US.

Here note, first, that *usually the spiritual life, as soon as it is commenced, experiences a former rain* or a delightful visitation of grace. Suffer me to charge your memories for a little while. You remember when you were converted to God, some of us recollect the day, and the hour, and the very spot, to a yard.

Others cannot so remember, but they need not therefore be discouraged, for if they are alive unto God, it is a small question about when they were born. They may rest assured, if their faith is resting upon Christ alone, it is well with them whether their conversion was gradual or sudden.

But I say, many of you remember when you were converted or thereabouts. Now, was not the period after you had believed in Jesus the happiest that you ever spent? Yes, though there have been times of joy since then, yet in some respects must not that period bear the palm? So blessed was our first conversion to some of us, that those first days are as green and fragrant in our memories as if they were but yesterday. They are as fresh and fair as if they had but just budded in the garden of time.

Other days, like withered flowers, are no longer sweet and lovely to gaze upon, but these are as well-bedewed with the freshness of the morning as though they were of the present rather than the past. What bliss it was to feel that we were saved! Our hearts danced at the very thought of full salvation. The only fear was that it was too good to be true. Our faith was exceedingly strong—Christ upon the cross was always in our view. We had no experience then to set in the place of Christ, no sanctification to mix up with His righteousness in our justification.

Our belief in Jesus was very simple and childlike, and consequently was very comforting and we were very, very happy. Oh, how blessed prayer was then! Then we did really talk with God. Then we did not need to whip ourselves up to our closets to pray—we only wished we could stay upon our knees all day long and talk our hearts out to God.

We little cared then whether the place of worship was hot or cold, whether we were seated or standing. We cared only for the Gospel. We would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon. It did not signify what was the style of the preacher—if he was eloquent, we did not hear him for his eloquence—we loved the Gospel too well to care about oratory. If a plain-speaking man told us of our Master and His love, we liked it all the better for his plainness of speech so long as we could but see our Master.

To hear anyone talk of a precious Christ and of pardon bought with blood, and of full and free salvation, was heaven to us. If, in those days, we had to suffer anything for Jesus, we only regretted we could not suffer more. We did not run out of the way of reproaches in those days, but were almost prepared to court them for His dear name's sake.

*“What peaceful hours we then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!”*

That was the early rain. The seed had just been sown, and the Master, to make it take deeper root and spring up faster into the green blade, gave us the sacred shower of His loving presence. There was much tender wisdom in this gentleness, for the new-born soul is very weak then.

Looking back to those days, we can clearly see what helpless infants we were. In knowledge we were very babes to whom many things could not be revealed, because we could not have borne them. We fancied that our souls' battle was over, that we were out of gunshot of the devil and doubt, whereas the fight was just commencing, a fight never to cease until death and heaven reveal the victory.

The Lord was pleased to restrain the enemy from tormenting us, because we could not then have fought it out with him. The great and good Lord tempered the wind to the shorn lamb. He covered the little bird with His feathers. He carried the baby in His arm. He watered the tender plants and set a hedge about them in love. The Great Husbandman knew how much our weak rootlets required the dew of heaven and therefore He liberally vouchsafed it.

Moreover, many of us before our conversion passed through fire and through water—conviction of sin frowned on us by the year together. We laid in Doubting Castle, and were beaten with the crab-tree cudgel of despair, fearing lest we were reprobates and past hope. It was tenderly wise on our Lord's part that when we came out at last, and rejoiced in a crucified Savior, we should enjoy a time of repose.

For our bones were broken, our moisture was turned into the drought of summer, and we were ready to die. It was kindness on God's part when our terrors had aggravated our weakness and depression of spirits, that He should give us a time of great delight, when the love of our espousals would make us forget our fears.

Besides, our Master at that time gave us the early rain, as it were, to give our young plant a start in commencing our heavenly growth—a growth to which we might look back in after years. How often have we been refreshed since then in our times of sorrow, by recollecting the months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about our head!

Those early, happy days! Could it have all been delusion? Was it all a mistake? What, when our sinful companions were all given up, when our darling lusts were all rent away, when the right eye was plucked out and the right arm cut off? Could it all have been a sham? When the head was leaned upon the Savior's bosom and the promise was so sweet!

Was it all excitement? No, our memory says it was not so—it was real, it was true. And He that gave us thus the foretaste, certainly has not changed.

*“His love in times past forbids us to think,
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink.”*

I do not give much for the faith which lives on past experience, for the precious faith of God's elect feeds on fresh manna day by day. But at the same time, there are dark and dreary moments when past experience serves us in good stead. Beloved Christian, if you are now this day in the dark, pluck a torch from the altars of yesterday, with which to kindle the lights of today. The faithful Promiser was with you then. You had His love to cheer you then. Go to Him yet once more, and you shall receive the latter rain of renewed grace from Him who gives grace upon grace.

Before I leave this point, let me say one word of encouragement to any who are seeking my Lord and Master. I trust some of you are doing so. You have long been hearers of the Word, but you are not converted yet, and perhaps you are sad because, after much seeking, you have not been found by Him.

Let me assure you, when you have found the Lord, your waiting will be richly recompensed. I would have lingered at His door for eighty years if He would for a recompense give me but the one kiss of His lips. I would fain lie at His pool of mercy, ay, a whole natural life, if but at the last my crimson sins might be washed away and my soul be made whiter than snow.

“Oh, but” you say, “if He come not soon, I shall die of despair before His coming!” But He will bring such cordials to you, such wines on the lees well-refined, that your despair shall take wings and fly

away. And instead of the black raven of doubt, you shall receive the dove of consolation, bringing the olive branch of peace in her mouth.

Hope you in God, for you shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. If you would have the early rain soon, do not wait any longer. Obey the Gospel precept at once, for simple obedience will bring the early rain at once. That precept is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Oh, the hundreds of times I have proclaimed this to you, and others have also proclaimed it in your ears, and yet you will not yield your hearts to it! You continue still to say, "I feel" or, "I do not feel," "I am," or "I am not." You have fifty thousand excuses why you should not comply with the Master's message.

No comfort, however, can be yours till, sink or swim, you cast yourself on Christ. If you will but trust Christ to save you, you shall be saved at this very hour. Now shall the burden of your guilt fall from your shoulders, and your peace be like a river, and you shall go on your way rejoicing that you are saved.

O why will you not obey this? May the Holy Spirit constrain you. May you now do, what I am sure if God has chosen you you will have to do ere long, namely, have done with yourself and close in with Christ. Have done with feelings or want of feelings, have done with your works, bad or good, have done with self and all that grows out of self, and come to that cross where hangs a bleeding Savior, the world's only hope. O that you could say, "My hope is there alone." It shall be well with you if you will now cast yourself upon Him. You shall then have a happy season, such as only believers know.

It is very usual in the life of grace for the soul to receive in after years, *a second very remarkable visitation of the Holy Spirit*, which may be compared to the latter rain. As I told you, the latter rain was sent to plump out the wheat, and make it full and mature, ready for the after-harvest ripening. So there is a time of special grace granted to saints, to prepare them for heaven, to make them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

To some, this is given in the form of what has very commonly, and I think correctly, been called a second conversion. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," was Christ's remark to Peter, who was even then a converted man.

My brethren, there is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian, as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling. Believe me, the life of grace is no dead level, it is not a fen country, a vast flat. There are mountains and there are valleys. There are tribes of Christians who live in the valleys, like the poor Swiss of the Valais, who live in the midst of the miasma, where fever has its lair, and the frame is languid and enfeebled. Such dwellers in the lowlands of unbelief are forever doubting, fearing, troubled about their interest in Christ, and tossed to and fro.

But there are other believers who, by God's grace, have climbed the mountain of full assurance and near communion. Their place is with the eagle in his eyrie, high aloft. They are like the strong mountaineer, who has trodden the virgin snow, who has breathed the fresh, free air of the Alpine regions, and therefore his sinews are braced and limbs are vigorous.

These are they who do great exploits, being mighty men, men of renown. The saints who dwell on high in the clear atmosphere of faith are rejoicing Christians, holy and devout men, doing service for the Master all over the world, and everywhere conquerors through Him that loved them.

And I desire—oh, how earnestly I desire you to be such men! My craving is that all of you, my beloved, who have been watered by the former rain, may also be refreshed by a more than ordinary latter rain, which shall make you more than ordinary Christians, bringing you beyond the blade period and the ear period, into the full corn in the ear.

The great policy of Satan of late with the church has been this, not so much to attack her with open infidelity—for really all the infidelity there is in England does not materially affect churches, worthy of the name, except to an almost infinitesimal extent. There is a deal more made of skepticism in certain quarters than there is any need for. Skeptics seldom get among our Christian people, at least, I do not meet with them in my inquiries, nor do I see them associating with Christians of my association.

The plan Satan seems to have adopted is not that of attacking our doctrine, but that of preventing as far as he can our raising in our midst a race of eminent and advanced Christians. Pharaoh said, "Destroy the male children." Satan seems to say, "Stop the male children from fulfilling their growth."

We are well enough in our way after the common run of manhood. We believe in Christ. We love Him and contribute something to His cause. We preach and we pray. We are a respectable sort of people after a way, but we do not grow to maturity or attain "unto the first three." We have in this age but few giants in grace who rise head and shoulders above the common height, men to lead us on in deeds of heroism and efforts of unstagging faith.

After all, the work of the Christian church, though it must be done by all, often owes its being done to single individuals of remarkable grace. In this degenerate time, we are very much as Israel was in the days of the Judges, for there were raised up among us leaders who judge Israel and are the terror of her foes.

Oh, if the church had in her midst a race of heroes, if our missionary operations could be attended with the holy chivalry which marked the church in the early days, if we could have back apostles and martyrs, or even such as Carey and Judson, what wonders would be wrought! We have fallen upon a race of dwarfs and are content, to a great extent, to have it so.

There was once in London a club of small men, whose qualification for membership lay in their not exceeding five feet in height. These dwarfs held, or pretended to hold, the opinion that they were nearer the perfection of manhood than others, for they argued that primeval men had been far more gigantic than the present race, and consequently the way of progress was to grow less and less, and that the human race as it perfected itself would become as diminutive as themselves.

Such a club of Christians might be established in London and without any difficulty might attain to an enormously numerous membership—for the notion is common that our dwarfish Christianity is after all the standard, and many even imagine that nobler Christians are enthusiasts, fanatical, and hot-blooded. While we are cool because we are wise and indifferent, because intelligent. We must get rid of all this nonsense.

The fact is, the most of us are vastly inferior to the early Christians, who, as I take it, were persecuted because they were thoroughly Christians, and we are not persecuted because we hardly are Christians at all. They were so earnest in the propagation of the Redeemer's kingdom, that they became the nuisance of the age in which they lived.

They would not let errors alone. They had not conceived the opinion that they were to hold the truth, and leave other people to hold error without trying to intrude their opinions upon them, but they preached Christ Jesus right and left, and delivered their testimony against every sin. They denounced the idols, and cried out against superstition, until the world, fearful of being turned upside down, demanded of them, "Is that what you mean? Then we will burn you, lock you up in prison, and exterminate you." To which the church replied, "We will accept the challenge and will not depart from our resolve to conquer the world for Christ."

At last the fire in the Christian church burned out the persecution of an ungodly world. But we are so gentle and quiet, we do not use strong language about other people's opinions, but let men go to hell out of charity to them. We are not at all fanatical, and for all we do to disturb him, the old manslayer has a very comfortable time of it.

We would not wish to save any sinner who does not particularly wish to be saved. If persons choose to attend our ministry, we shall be pleased to say a word to them in a mild way, but we do not speak with tears streaming down our cheeks, groaning and agonizing with God for them. Neither would we thrust our opinions upon them, though we know they are being lost for want of the knowledge of Christ crucified.

May God send the latter rain to His church, to me, and to you, and may we begin to bestir ourselves, and seek after the highest form of earnestness for the kingdom of King Jesus. May the days come in

which we shall no longer have to complain that we sow much, and reap little, but may we receive a hundredfold reward, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Very feebly, but still with the most earnest intentions, I have endeavored to excite in you an ambition after a higher life and the setting up of a higher standard. Seek to love your Master more, pray to be filled with His Spirit. Do not be mere trades people who are Christianized, but be Christians everywhere—not plated goods, but solid metal.

Be you servants of Jesus Christ, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do. Serve Him with both your hands and all your heart. Get your manhood strung to the utmost tension and throw its whole force into your Redeemer's service. Live while you live. Drivel not away your existence upon baser ends, but count the glory of Christ to be the only object worthy of your manhood's strength, the spread of the truth the only pursuit worthy of your mental powers. Spend and be spent in your Master's service.

I must draw to a close by noticing that the text speaks of a third thing. There is the former rain, and the latter rain, and then he says, "He has reserved for us *the appointed weeks of harvest.*" Yes, if we shall get this latter rain—and may we have it!—it will then be time to be looking forward to our harvest. Consider well that the harvest begins in the field, though it ends in the garner. Going to heaven begins upon earth, and as the text tell us of weeks, so may I add that going to glory is often a long work.

I believe God takes months and years in getting in His sheaves. We call it dying, do we not? But it is not dying I am talking of now—that is but the work of an instant—but I refer to going home, and that is a longer process. When the sickle cuts away the wheat from the earth, the harvest is begun. The grain is not garnered yet, but still that is separated from earth and that is half the harvest.

Even so in the process of getting a soul to heaven, it must be detached from the earth whereon it grew. The sickle has cut many of our earth-bonds already for some of us, and no doubt the gash at the time has been very deep and sharp, but how could we as God's wheat be carried into the garner without first of all being separated from the earth? How could our immortal spirits enter into the everlasting rest without first of all being dissociated from everything in which we tried to find a rest below?

It is a sign of getting near to heaven when we gradually bid adieu to those things that we hoped at one time to dwell with forever—when the almost idolized comforts are readily resigned—when absorbing aims and engrossing objects are thrust back into the rear ranks, and the things eternal fill the foreground of our souls.

It is a glorious thing to become indifferent to the visible and only earnest about the invisible. We are like a balloon while it is tied to the earth, it cannot mount. Even so our ascent to heaven is delayed by a thousand detaining cords and bands, and the process of setting us free is cutting the ropes one by one.

Some of you are conscious of getting older and weaker, God is evidently loosening the ties of earth. You have already more relatives in heaven than on earth. If you count over the names of dear companions on earth, they make but a slender list. But count over the names of dear saints which have gone before, and with whom you have had fellowship, and then the roll is long. Be thankful that you have so many ties upward and so few bonds to earth. Prepare to mount to the majority. The wheat may well-rejoice for the sharp cuts of the sickle, because it is the sign of going home to the garner.

After the wheat is cut, it stands in shocks, shocks of corn fully ripe, not growing out of the earth, but merely standing on it. The shock is quite disconnected from the soil. How happy is the state of a Christian when he is in the world, but is not linked to it! His ripeness drops here and there a grain into the soil, for he is still ready to do good, but he has no longer any vital connection with aught below, he is waiting to be in heaven.

Here comes the wain. The corn is put into it and with shoutings it is carried home. Soon will our heavenly Father send His chariot, and we who have been ripened by the latter rain, and separated from earth by His Spirit's sickle, shall be borne in the chariot of triumph, amidst the shoutings of the angels, and the songs of thrice blessed spirits, up to the eternal garner.

Oh, how it overcomes one to think that we shall ever be there! Here we are like the wheat that is under the snow, or bitten by the frost, or nibbled by the sheep, subject to blight, and blast, and mildew,

but up there we shall be as the wheat in the garner, beyond the reach of danger, our Lord and Master's everlasting portion, the dear reward of all His sufferings and griefs, which were His ploughings and sowings for us.

Shall it always be so? Shall our heads ever wear the starry crown, our hands ever strike celestial harp strings? Oh, yes! It must be so, for we have believed in Jesus and faith in Jesus secures a portion amongst the blessed.

Pluck up courage, you faint-hearted ones, and gathering courage, gather also strong desire. Pray for your own maturity and perfection. Seek this day in earnest secret prayer the latter rain, because you know it shall have the best results. It shall not be wasted drops, but it shall fall to be repaid by you in increasing faith, and love, and holiness, and heavenliness, that Christ's wheat when gathered in may be worthy of the labor He has spent upon it.

May God bless you, dear brethren and sisters, and lead you on from strength to strength. And if any of you, my hearers, are not Christians, may the Lord, the Spirit, lead you to the cross of Jesus Christ and His shall be the glory.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—COLOSSIANS 3

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