

MARVELOUS! MARVELOUS!

NO. 1747

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in my eyes? says the LORD of hosts.”
Zechariah 8:6.

GOD sent His servant Zechariah with a promise that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and that it should enjoy a time of great peace and prosperity. Instead of men being slain in battle in the prime of their days, old men and old women were to dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, “every man with his staff in his hand for very age.” And whereas war had often cut off the women and the children, the promise further added, “The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.”

Everything was to be prosperous in the land around, so as to bring plenty into the city—“For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.” It was a sweet assurance and it ought to have made them very happy, but it did not.

When this gracious promise came, it startled the people, for it seemed past belief. The unbelievers did not say point blank, “This promise is not true,” but deep in their hearts they thought as much. It is not the general habit of unbelief among God’s people to give a flat contradiction to His promises. We are hardly honest enough to our own thoughts to express them with deliberate plainness of speech. Even unbelief loves to wear some cobweb covering or other, that its naked deformity may not appear. Our reverence for the Lord will not permit us distinctly to give Him the lie, but it comes to much the same thing, for in our heart of hearts we deny the truthfulness of His Word.

The remnant of Israel said, “How can this thing be? In these days, in these troublous days, in these threatening days, how can Jerusalem be made to prosper? Former hopes have been disappointed. We see no better signs of the times, and doubtless, if our hopes be now raised, they will again be disappointed. How can the city rise from its ashes? We can hardly think it possible. At any rate, it will be marvelous, extremely difficult, exceedingly unlikely, indeed, impossible.” They did not say at once, “It will not be,” but they said, “It will be a marvelous thing,” by which they meant that it was not in the least likely.

You who carry Bibles with you which have the marginal readings, will notice that in the margin there is the word “difficult,” and the text may be read thus, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it be difficult in your eyes, should it also be difficult in my eyes?” This is the only instance in which the word “difficult” occurs in our version of the Bible, and in this case it is only to be found in the margin.

There is too much of God in the Bible for difficulties to live in it. I should be very glad if I could always put the word “difficult” into the margin of my life, and never let it stand in the substance of it. I wish my faith would banish it. Difficulty does crop up now and then through unbelief, but where God manifests Himself, difficulty vanishes. Leave it in the margin, brother! Leave it in the margin. Let it not be read in the annals of your actual life.

A brave self-reliance blots the word *difficult* out of its dictionary, and a full God-reliance may much more safely do so. If God is for us, all things can be accomplished. Things impossible with men are possible with God. The remnant of Israel said, “It will be difficult,” and then they softened the words a little, and said, “It will be marvelous in our eyes.”

Still it came to this at the bottom, that they did not believe the Word of the Lord. They could not conceive how the promise could be fulfilled, and therefore because it surpassed their conception, they

supposed that the Lord was equally baffled and perplexed. Because the restored prosperity of Jerusalem would be a great wonder, they doubted if it could ever be accomplished. Yet, blessed be the name of the Lord, it was accomplished, for “though we believe not, he abides faithful; he cannot deny himself.”

It certainly was a marvelous thing that Jerusalem, after having been so dreadfully destroyed, should again lift up its head and enjoy a little period of sunlight. But we are called upon to believe in even greater wonders—wonders of a spiritual kind, which are more difficult to believe than material miracles. I am going to talk about what to every intelligent and awakened mind will be the greatest wonder of all, namely, the possibility of our salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Satan will assail you who are saved, and you who are seeking to be saved, and he will aim a blow at your faith. If he does not dare to tell you in his own native tongue of point-blank lying that the promise which the Gospel makes to the believer is false, yet he will lead you to think it highly improbable, too good to be true, too wonderful ever to happen, in a word, he will make it appear marvelous in your eyes and he will hint that it is incredible.

So this morning, I am going first to speak upon *carnal reasoning*, how it runs. Secondly, offer a *correction to that reasoning* by pointing out an untruth which lies at the bottom of it. And thirdly, I will try, in conclusion, to dwell upon the truth of the matter and see if we cannot enjoy some *right reasoning*. O blessed Spirit of grace, teach our reason right reason at this hour, and make us to perceive all things in the light of the truth!

I. Here we have before us a specimen of CARNAL REASONING.

The Jews of those days said, “It is difficult; it will never be performed. It is marvelous in our eyes; it will never happen.” This kind of speech comes from men as soon as they begin to think about their souls, and to desire the salvation of the Lord. We inform them in God’s name that whosoever repents of sin and confesses it, and believes in Jesus Christ, shall receive immediate pardon, and this good news surprises them, as well it may.

Straightway the old serpent begins to hiss out a doubt and they ask, “How can it be? Can a man receive in one moment forgiveness for fifty years of sin? How can his conscience be cleared by the simple act of believing in Christ? How can the record of a life of evil be blotted out at once?” Assuredly, it does not seem possible to a troubled mind. Reason decides that it must be very difficult. Common sense assents that it is a marvelous affair altogether, and the poor awakened hearts conclude that the promise of full, free, and present forgiveness cannot be true. Thus they push the promise of God concerning pardon to one side as a good thing which is quite past belief.

Then comes the blessing of renewal of heart, such as God speaks of in the covenant promise, “A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them.” Our hearer understands that upon his believing in Jesus he is born again, and becomes a new creature, with new likes and new hates, an entirely altered being. But understanding the promise is one thing, and believing it is another.

A new heart the awakened one desires, but he considers it too great a marvel. He asks, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Can I, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well? It will be marvelous indeed if such a sinner as I should be turned into a saint, if such a rebel as I should become a loyal subject of King Jesus! Such a conversion will be most extraordinary. I do not think it can be carried out.”

He knows that he cannot subdue his own stubborn will, nor conquer his own unruly passions, and therefore he concludes that the thing is impossible, and not to be looked for. Thus another choice covenant promise is thrown to one side by unbelief, and the man sits down in self-created despair, under the persuasion that a new birth for him would be too marvelous a thing to expect.

Even if the awakened soul proceeds as far as believing in the first two blessings, unbelief comes to him in another way, for this thief is sure to meet the traveler to Zion again and again. The Lord has promised that the righteous shall hold onto His way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. And Christ has declared that the living water which He gives shall be no transient boon, but shall be in a man a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

“Oh, but,” says the tempted one, “how can I hope to persevere to the end? I shall be one of these days tempted so strongly that I shall be carried off my feet. What with indwelling sin and a cunning tempter, and a world full of evil, I cannot hope to endure to the end. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Do you assure me that the righteous shall hold onto their way? Then it will be marvelous, it must be so difficult that I fear it is improbable, if not impossible.” Thus unbelief pushes to one side another covenant blessing.

Further on there comes to the man who has been helped to persevere for a while the promise that he shall ultimately be presented faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy. This promise is assailed in the same manner. The serpent of unbelief leaves its slimy trail upon everything. We are told that a day shall come when the believer shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, made meet to dwell with the angels in light, ay, and to dwell with God Himself forever. And straightway the soul is tempted to think this wonderful effect of grace to be impossible.

When we remember how often we have been worsted by the enemy, how frail, how fallible we are, and how fierce and subtle is our adversary, we dare not hope that we shall see him utterly defeated and his power broken to pieces. We dwell upon the fact that it will be very marvelous. Indeed the more we think of it, the more marvelous it becomes in our eyes. And alas! unbelief leaps upon the back of our wonder, and we judge that the blessing can never be ours.

Thus another promised blessing is thrown under the table. In fact, each mercy of God’s covenant is looked at, wondered at, and then renounced, not because it is undesirable, but because it is so good, so rich, and so full. O wretched unbelief which makes the excellence of the favor into a reason for refusing it! Help us, O Holy Spirit, to believe our Lord, and to reason no more in this evil fashion!

I have known children of God in the time of their great trial, when they have been surrounded with afflictions, oppressed with poverty, and depressed in spirit, to become quite incredulous as to the possibility of deliverance. They ask, “How can God cause our bread to be given us and our water to be sure *now*? Can He bring us out of such sore trouble as this? We know that He has been gracious to His people in other instances, but our case is one of peculiar difficulty. Surely our Lord has quite forsaken us, our God will be gracious no more.”

This comes of reasoning, falsely so called. When we see no passage through our straits, we are sadly apt to conclude that God sees none. He has promised that with every trial He will make us a way of escape, but we doubt His Word. Like the unbelieving lord in the Book of Kings, we say, “If God would make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?” Have you ever said that, my brother, in your spirit? Dear sister, has not the evil one whispered such a word in your ears in dark times? Have you not fancied that at last you have passed beyond the reach of divine help and will surely perish?

In this way carnal reason is sure to argue and rob God of His glory, and our souls of consolation. It has been so from the beginning, that while doubting God we cover our unbelief with an evil sophistry, but this sophistry does not avail to remove the mischievous tendencies of our mistrust. Unbelievers by this wicked reasoning are left in their spiritual death, while believers are hampered and sorely wounded. O accursed unbelief, this is your false argument, “It is marvelous, and therefore it cannot be true!” We answer you that because it is marvelous it is all the more likely to be true.

II. Secondly, we will now aim our arrows at the dark spot in this carnal argument, which makes it all to be false, or in other words, we will CORRECT THIS REASONING.

First, let us note that when because the blessing promised is marvelous, we therefore doubt the promise of God concerning it, *we must have forgotten God*. “If it be marvelous in your eyes, says the LORD of hosts, is it therefore marvelous in my eyes?” God Himself puts it so, and there is but one answer to the question. My text is a very singular one, for it is hedged in with the name of the Lord, and with a double, “thus says the LORD of hosts.” It begins with, “Thus says the LORD of hosts,” and it finishes up with, “says the LORD of hosts,” as if twice to bring to our memory that God is, and that God has made a promise, and that this Promiser is JEHOVAH the great and powerful, the Lord of all, who has countless armies at His beck and call. This unbelief forgets and hence her error.

To come to our one subject, that of your own salvation, you hear the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus and your mind replies, "It is marvelous, it is difficult." Do you not see that you are looking at it as if *you* had made the promise? From that standpoint it would be indeed difficult, even to impossibility. But whose promise is it? It is not yours, but God's. If you were to promise to give yourself eternal life, to keep yourself to the end, and sanctify yourself perfectly, what a foolish person you would be to undertake what you could not possibly perform! But it is not *your* promise, it is God's promise. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Do look at it in that light. It is a marvelous promise for you to receive, but the God who spoke it knew what He was saying, and He knew that He had power to perform it. It is the promise of God, "who alone does great wonders." Remember that.

And remember, next, that God does not look to you to fulfill His promises. Do not fall into such a foolish imagining. If you make a promise, it is your own business to carry it out, is it not? And if God makes a promise that He will save a sinner, whose work is it to save that sinner? Why, it is the work of the God who made the promise. It is written, "He that believes in him has everlasting life." "Marvelous," you say, but who says it? Why, God. Then it is God's department to make it true. If you would but remember this, that the pardon of sin is God's business, that the renewing of the heart is God's business, that the keeping of the saint to the end is God's business, that the sanctifying and perfecting of all believers is God's business, then you would find it more easy to believe. Can anything surpass the power of God? Did you ever hear of the Lord being baffled in His designs? Can it be possible that He has promised what He is not able to perform?

The false reasoning which cries—"It is marvelous, and therefore impossible," ignores altogether the fact that God is a marvelous Being, and that if His promise is marvelous, it is like Himself. He is a great God and His power and wisdom are infinite. Can anything surpass His ability? Would you have the infinite God confine His promises and gifts to common-place matters? Would it be seemly that the Lord, who is infinite in resources, should do nothing but what you can understand? O sirs, you forget the Eternal, and therefore doubt the promise, do so no more.

And further, the error which vitiates the argument of carnal reason takes another shape. There is here, as far as the Lord is thought of at all, *an underestimate of God*. The Lord puts this very plainly in our text—"If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in my eyes?" You are judging God as if He were like yourself. You have been calculating divine possibilities by the scale of your own capacity. You have lowered God to the limit of your understanding, you have narrowed Him to your notion of what He can do, and thus you degrade His greatness to your littleness, His wisdom to your folly, His power to your weakness.

The deed of salvation is marvelous with you, but it is not strange with God, to whom it has been the great thought of eternity, towards which He causes all things to move. Everything in wonder depends upon the person affected by it. A trader goes to Africa, he takes with him a looking-glass and you see the chiefs gather around, and with wonder they gaze upon their own pleasing countenances in the mirror. It is marvelous to them. It becomes the talk of the tribe. But that mirror is not marvelous to the trader who brought it there.

A musical box is set playing, and a whole village of Africans gather about it, unanimously believing that it must be at least a spirit, if not a God. To them it is a great marvel, and they expect the white man to marvel too, for they measure his capacity by their own. Yet their wonderful thing is to an Englishman, a mere simplicity. Shall we set it down for certain that what is a wonder to us is a wonder to God? This would be absurd. The Lord can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think, there is no bounding His power, no searching of His understanding.

"But my sin," you say, "who is to subdue it?" Not you, certainly! But the Lord of hosts is able to overcome the power of sin. Do not measure God by yourself. "But my trouble, who can bring me through it?" Nobody can, except the everlasting God, who faints not, neither is weary. The end of the creature is the starting-place of the Creator. The limit of our power is soon reached, but the wings of the

morning could not bear us beyond the power divine. Whatsoever the Lord wills is accomplished, be sure of that.

When we begin to doubt whether God will love us to the end, is it not measuring God's patience by our impatience? Is there not a calculating of God's immutability by our mutability? Because *we* change and grow weary, shall we fancy that the Lord also changes? Is there variableness and turning with the great Father of lights? Has not the Lord declared, "I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed"?

When we doubt God's wisdom by questioning whether He can find a way of keeping His Word and helping us, is it not because our little knowledge is exhausted and our plans broken down, and therefore we conclude that God's plans will break down too, and His invention will fail to contrive our deliverance? But beloved, it is not so. The Lord's way is in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. His footsteps are not seen, but He walks on the sea, He rides on the wings of the wind. He everywhere has sway, and all things answer to His purpose and accomplish His designs. Leave off doubting, and believe that the Lord's thoughts are as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

It is at bottom our pride, which makes us judge the Lord to be like ourselves. If you degrade God to be like to man, it is because you idolize man and make him like God. Who are you, you creature of an hour? Who are you, you creeping insect upon the bay leaf of existence? Who are you, poor mortal, that today is, and tomorrow is shoveled back into mother earth, that you should begin to measure God? Go, measure heaven with your span, weigh the Alps in scales, and the Andes in balances, and hold the Atlantic in the hollow of your hand, and when you have done these things know that you are not at the beginning of the measurement of the wisdom, the power, the truth, and the goodness of the Lord. This, however, is the fault of carnal reasoning, that it judges the Lord of hosts by the miserable standard of human weakness.

Do you not see, dear friends, that if we begin to say that God's promise is so marvelous that it cannot be performed, *we do the infinite God high dishonor?* You dishonor His power by imagining that a difficulty has arisen which He cannot meet. You suppose a power greater than God, since it baffles and defeats Him. What is this but to set up another god? It is a fault charged upon Israel of old as a very provoking crime, that they limited the Holy One of Israel. Oh that we may never be guilty of this offense!

But you do worse than that, for I can suppose God to bear the dishonor of His power being limited, but it is far worse practically to insinuate that He boasts beyond His line. I tremble as I say that unbelief accuses the Lord of vain boasting. When a man promises you what he knows he cannot perform, what opinion do you form of him? You say at once, "Why, the man is a boaster. He is big at talking, but small at performing." Will you insinuate that of the Lord God? Has it come to this, that you dare criticize your Maker? Do you dare insinuate that the infinite JEHOVAH has promised to a sinner what He is incapable of giving him? God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," and you say, "No, I could not be saved." Does God, then, speak beyond His ability? Does He promise what He is not able to perform? This is a form of blasphemy from which may we be cleansed through the blood of our Lord Jesus.

Or is it that you dream that God does not know His own strength? What! Is the Almighty ignorant? Is the only wise God unaware of His own power? Does He not know what He can do? I will not say that a man brags when he promises what he cannot perform, provided that he is unaware of his inability, for in such a case he blunders through ignorance or conceit of himself. Do you dare charge either of these upon God? Far from me to have such an evil thought.

I feel this morning that if all your sins were mine, yet since the Lord has promised pardon to him that believes, I could and would believe over the head of all that mass of sin. Yea, if all the iniquities of all the men that ever lived were laid upon my soul, yet upon that assurance, "The blood of Jesus Christ His

Son cleanses us from all sin,” I would even venture my soul’s hope of salvation, and make sure of success.

If the Lord has given a promise to His people that He will keep them to the end, and that they shall not perish, then He will keep them to the end without fail. Why, brothers, if our road to heaven were thick with devils, so that they stood like blades of wheat in a corn field, yet we should be able to force a lane right through the crowded host, the Lord JEHOVAH being our helper. If all the powers that are, or were, or can be, were to raise themselves up against the promise of God, in the name of God would we defy and defeat them.

The Word of the Lord makes us more than conquerors. David said of old, “They compassed me about like bees; yea, they compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” What can stand against the feeblest man that lives if he has God’s promise to back him? The Lord can do just what He wills, whoever may oppose. Wherefore let us fling away this folly of ours in supposing that, because a work of grace is marvelous in our eyes, it is therefore marvelous in the eyes of the Lord. That which is difficult with us is easy with Him. There is a radical mistake at the bottom of all this wicked, unbelieving reasoning—it leaves out the Lord altogether, or degrades Him below the glory of His Godhead.

III. We have reached the third division of our discourse, and here let us practice a little RIGHT REASONING.

I invite any here who are troubled with doubts about the promise of God to follow me in a few simple considerations.

First, *it is quite clear that for our salvation, marvels must be wrought.* It will be a wonder in all ages for any one of us to attain to glory. It will need the omnipotence of God to renew, preserve, and perfect us. It is a rule with regard to miracles that God is very economical with them. In the Romish Church you have miracles in abundance, such as they are, but they are for the most part needless parades of power.

When St. Denis, after his head was cut off, picked it up in his hands and walked a thousand miles with it, the dear good man might as well have saved himself and his head the unsightly pilgrimage. When the blood of St. Januarius liquefies, or a Madonna winks, it may be interesting, but one does not see the necessity for either performance.

The God of the Scriptures has no hand in such miracles. They are not of the same order as those which are wrought by His right hand. Our Lord never uses a miracle where the same thing could be done by the ordinary processes of nature. But whenever a miracle is requisite, a miracle is forthcoming—there is no stint of power though there is no wasteful display of it. I argue, then, that if it is necessary for you to be saved in order that God’s promise may be kept, you shall be saved. And if in order to this, marvels are needed, marvels will happen.

The Lord reserves no strength when it is needful to expend it for the fulfillment of His promises. If omnipotence must make bare His arm, it shall be bared. The Lord led His people Israel to the Red Sea, perhaps if the Egyptians had not come up, it might have been possible to make rafts to ferry them across the gulf, and we are sure it would have been done if it had been the best way of achieving the Lord’s design. But when the Egyptians were so close behind that you could hear the neighing of their horses, and almost feel the hot breath of their vengeful masters, then there remained no ordinary way for the people of God to escape, and lo! the mighty depths yawned before the tribes, and a road was opened through the heart of the sea that the people of God might pass through.

So it shall be with you. If to forgive your sin needs a miracle of grace, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the miracle of grace is done. If to change your nature needs the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit waits to work that great change. Nay, He has wrought the change, and your faith is the evidence of it.

If it shall need all the power of God to keep one of His children to the end, all that power shall be seen in Him, for though God works not miracles till they are needed, He is not slow to do so when the case demands them. He will shake heaven and earth to complete the salvation of His chosen. Therefore,

if a deed of grace be marvelous in your eyes, say to yourself, “Marvelous as it is, nothing short of it will avail and therefore, it shall be done.”

It was marvelous that God should become man, but as there was no salvation for us apart from Immanuel God with us, Jesus was born of a woman. It is marvelous that the Son of God should die, but as there was no salvation apart from His death, He died upon the cross. If the Lord has given a promise, it must be carried out cost what it may, for His name is, “God That Cannot Lie.” If there is no way of bringing a saint to God except by the Holy Ghost’s dwelling in him, which is a great wonder, then the Holy Ghost shall dwell in him, for the many sons must be brought unto glory, and if marvels are needed as many as the hairs on their heads, so many marvels there shall be.

A second little bit of reasoning may tend to comfort some of you, namely, that, *after all, marvelous things are the rule with God*. I say not miracles, although it is difficult to draw the line between the ordinary processes of God’s working and the extraordinary ones, for the ordinary are extraordinary, and His extraordinary deeds can hardly be more marvelous than His daily operations.

All the works of God in creation are marvels. Take the telescope and search out the stars. Assuredly an “undevout astronomer is mad.” When we perceive somewhat of the multitudes of worlds that God has made, their vast distances, the proportions of their bulk, the regularity of their orbits, and the rapidity of their motions, we discover that the great machinery of nature is ordered by infinite skill. “It is the LORD’s doing” and it is marvelous in our eyes. Surely that God who flings the stars about with both His hands can give us our daily bread. If He makes worlds to fly off like sparks from the anvil of His omnipotence, He can make new creatures in Christ Jesus. If He keeps all those heavenly lamps shining so brightly for centuries, He can sustain grace in the hearts of His people without difficulty.

But now if you have done with the telescope, please put it by, and let me lend you a microscope. Look at a butterfly from your garden. Nay, you need not trouble to examine the whole creature, a portion of a broken wing will suffice for your astonishment. Here is a spider’s eye! Are you not surprised? This is the petal of a flower—what amazing beauty!

Take but a single portion of a minute blood vessel and study it awhile. I hear you say, “I never could have believed it. This glass reveals to me such wonders that I am utterly astounded.” God is as great in the little as in the great, He is God everywhere. If a man carefully fashions a needle, it appears to be exquisitely smooth and polished. Ah! it is only bright because your eye is dim. Put it under the glass. It is transformed into a rough bar of iron. No works of man will bear to be examined with a microscope, but you may search the Lord’s work with the utmost care. The most commonest, plainest, simplest, most ordinary creation of God is perfect. Since, then, all nature teems with marvels, why put aside a promise of God because it involves a marvel? Is such conduct reasonable?

However, if you have read through all the pages of nature, which I am sure you have not, I would invite you to peruse the book of providence and see what marvels are there. I will give you no illustrations, because your own life will probably furnish you with such. If not, look at the history of any country. See how wondrously God has wrought out His everlasting purposes of justice or of mercy in each land. The story of providence contains a world of wonders. Why, then, should you doubt the promise of God because it involves a marvel? Rather believe it for that very reason. I think there is good reasoning in all this.

Follow me yet a little further, when I say that *you must be prepared to abandon altogether the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ if you make it a rule to disbelieve the marvelous*. The greatest marvel that I ever heard of is this—“Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.” How the infinite could become one with the finite, so that the baby at Bethlehem should be the Mighty God, I cannot tell and I think you cannot. Are you prepared to forego the incarnation of Christ? For if you are not, you must not refuse to believe in any act of God because it is marvelous, for it cannot be more marvelous than God in human flesh.

Think again, it is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity that the dead will rise again, that at the sounding of the trump of God they that are in their graves will rise to be judged in their bodies. Is not this a

marvel? Stand in a cemetery and ask the question, "Can these dry bones live?" Do you believe in the resurrection? Then you must never set aside any promise of God because it involves a marvel. You also believe, according to the Word of the Lord, that this world will one day be the home of God's glory, for there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness, and the travail of the groaning creation shall come to an end, and this world shall be made anew a temple for the Lord. What an extraordinary thing this will be! Yet you believe it. Do not therefore ever doubt a single promise that God makes either to saint or sinner because it contains a marvel.

Yet, again, I want you to follow me in another thought, namely, that *greater marvels have been already wrought than any which your salvation and mine will involve*. Brothers, if it had been whispered to any of us that God would take upon Himself human form and dwell among men, we should have looked much astonished. But if the prophet had added, "In that form He will be despised and spit upon, and hung up to die a felon's death, because He will bear the sin of man which will be laid upon His perfect person, so that He will be made a curse for us," we should have said, "No, that cannot be."

Beloved, it has been! Atonement has been accomplished. Christ has borne the load of His people's sins up to the cross and He has hurled that weight from His shoulders into His own sepulcher, and left it there buried forever. No wonder like this remains to be done, the greatest deed is finished. The renewal of our nature, and the forgiveness of our sin, are but little things compared with what Christ has already done. That He should now save His people seems to me, not at all extraordinary.

It would be more extraordinary that He should die, and not save those for whom He died. Having paid the ransom price for His heritage, it is but a natural consequence that it should be set free. The greater wonder has already amazed angels, and principalities, and powers. Oh, think not, though I for lack of time have passed lightly over this miracle of miracles, the death of our blessed Lord, that there is not much more to be said of this great wonder! Why, in dying, our Lord destroyed death, and cried, "Where is your sting?" In rising again, He burst the bands of the sepulcher and opened a way to life to all believers. In ascending the starry road, He led captivity captive, and took possession of heaven in the name of all His redeemed.

And now, this day, He that was despised and rejected has all power given to Him in heaven and in earth on our behalf. These great wonders have been finished and registered in heaven. It only remains for us simply to receive the result of them by believing in Christ Jesus our Lord. To deliver us from the wrath to come is now comparatively but a small marvel. Compared with the griefs and death of the Son of God, nothing great remains. Think of that, and let your faith be encouraged.

I will not detain you except to remind you of the sweet thought that *the more marvels there may be in our salvation the more glorifying it will be to God*. Do think of that. The more difficult it will be to save you, the more glory to God when He has achieved it. Your sin washed away will only demonstrate the power of the precious blood of Jesus. Your hard, stubborn will subdued, will only prove the might of the love of Christ upon your soul. Your trials, and temptations, and weaknesses, and infirmities will only glorify that almighty strength which is working in you to produce your ultimate perfection.

Believe the promise all the more because it is so wonderful, and therefore so honoring to the Lord. Do not let the marvel stagger you, let it encourage you. Say, "If this involved nothing wonderful, I could not think it came from God, but inasmuch as it is great and high, it is all the more worthy of God." Make the difficulties of the Bible a help to your faith, and let the greatness of grace render you the more hopeful of receiving it.

Lastly, let me say, whenever you have any doubts and fears, do *turn away your mind from the thing that is promised to the faithful Promiser*. We want larger ideas of God altogether. If we had them we should find it easy to believe His Word. I remember when I was a boy being taken to see the residence of one of our nobility, and the good friend who took me noticed my astonishment at the largeness of the house. I was amazed at it, having never seen anything like it, and so I said, "What a house for a man to live in!" "Bless you, boy," said he, "this is only the kitchen!" I was only looking at the servants' apartments, and was astonished at the grandeur thereof. But the mansion itself was a far nobler affair.

Oftentimes when you see what the Lord has done, you are ready to cry out, “How can all this be? His goodness, His mercy, is it as great as this?” Rest assured that you have only seen a little of His goodness, as if it were the kitchen of His great house. You have not seen the palace of the Most High, where He reveals His full power and splendor.

You know the story of the warrior, who, having led his men into a difficult position, went round at night to their tents. He said to himself, “If they are all in good heart we shall fight well tomorrow, but certainly this battle needs our entire valor. I should like to know the spirit of my men.” Going round the camp secretly, he heard in a tent some half-dozen soldiers conversing, and one of them above the rest was saying, “I think our general has made a great mistake this time. Look at the enemy. They have so many cavalry, so many infantry and guns, and so forth.” He added up all the force of the enemy and another soldier chimed in, “What do you suppose our strength to be?”

So the other calculated—so many footmen, so many horsemen, so many artillerymen, and so on. He was just going to total it up and make a very small concern of the whole, when the general drew aside the canvas of the tent and said, “And pray, my man, how many do you count me for?” Did all the general’s skill, and valor, and renown, count for nothing? He who had won so many fights, could he not win again?

Just so, the Lord Jesus Christ, whenever we begin summing up our strength, or rather our weakness, seems to appear and say, “How many do you count Me for?” O sirs! You have not counted the Lord Jesus at the millionth part of what He is. Nay, the firmest believer here has not yet reached the trailing skirts of the garments of divine omnipotence. Let us enlarge our minds. Come, blessed Spirit, reveal Christ in us, and let us know more of God, and trust Him better, and let nothing be unbelievably marvelous in our eyes, since nothing can be too hard for the Lord. God bless you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—NUMBERS 11:1—23, 2 KINGS 7

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—186, 192, 686

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