THE BREAKER AND THE FLOCK

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A SERMON
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"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold:
they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.
The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate,
and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them,
and the LORD at the head of them."
Micah 2:12-13

YOU will remember, dear friends, from our reading last Sabbath morning, in the second chapter of the Book of Micah, that the prophet was delivering reproofs and rebukes against a sinful people, a people who tried to straiten the Spirit, and silence the voice of prophecy, and refused to listen to the messengers of God.

He threatened them with condign punishment from the Most High. To our surprise, in the very midst of the threatening, he delivers a prediction brimming with mercy. Not only is not the Spirit of the Lord straitened, but even the people of the Lord are not to be straitened, for One has come forth who will be to them both Liberator and Leader.

Judgment is God's strange work, and He rejoices, even in the midst of threatening to turn aside and utter gracious words to obedient souls. Surely the brightest and most silvery drops of love that have ever distilled upon men have fallen in close connection with storms of divine justice. The acceptable year of the Lord is hard by the day of vengeance of our God.

The blackness of the tempest of His wrath acts as a foil to set forth more brightly the glory of His grace. In this case the thunderbolts stay their course in mid-volley—when the prophet is hurling destruction upon sin and sinners, he pauses to interpose a passage of promise most rich and gracious—a passage which I wish to open up to you at this time, as the Spirit of God shall enable me.

Certain willful persons were proudly confident that no enemy could reach them behind the walls of their cities, though the Lord declared that He would make Samaria a heap, and would strip Jerusalem. They coveted fields and took them by violence, and went on with their oppressions as if there had been no Judge of all the earth.

The Lord warned them again and again—and assured them that they must not expect to be preserved from chastisement because they were the Lord's people. They boasted that God would protect them, yea, they leaned upon the Lord, and said. "Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." He told them that Zion should be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem should become heaps. They were by no means to escape the rod.

Rather might they look for grace after they had been severely chastened. They would be carried away into captivity, but yet there would come a day in which they would be gathered out of the places wherein they had been scattered, and brought back to their own land. The prophet cried to the daughter of Zion, "Thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies."

Truly, the Lord forgets not to devise means to bring again His banished ones. The words of Micah in the passage before us agree with many others which fell from the lips of prophets, for it is the way of the Lord to restore His chosen in the day of their repentance. Did He not say, by His servant Amos, "Lo, I

will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

He will preserve the chosen race even in their scattering, and then in His own appointed time He will seek them out according to His own Word—"He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock." These gathered ones were to be led back to their land under the guidance of a great Shepherd whose business it would be to break down all obstacles and clear the road for them, so that they might safely reach their resting place.

I have no doubt that the first fulfillment of this prophecy was given when Cyrus conquered Babylon, and gave permission for Israel to return to their own land. Cyrus may be regarded as "the breaker," for the prophet Isaiah wrote concerning him, "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."

Then the willing-hearted of Israel gathered together to rebuild the house of the Lord, and to this center multitudes hastened, the Lord being with them, and sending them prosperity. It was of these favored ones that we find a striking fulfillment of our text as to the noise made by the concourse of men. Ezra tells us that, "The people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." Then was this promise in a measure fulfilled.

But brethren, the promises of the Lord are perennial springs forever overflowing with new fulfillments. In the latter days, the God of Israel, in abundant grace, will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will gather together His ancient nation who are at this time a people scattered and peeled.

These shall be converted to the Christ of God, and then shall be accomplished the Word of the prophet—"I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." The Son of David, whom their fathers slew, not knowing what they did, shall be made known to them as the promised seed, and then they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him. May this day soon come!

Then shall the veil be taken away from their hearts, and the cloud shall no longer hang over Israel's head, but the Lord shall restore them, and they shall rejoice in Him. The day comes when the Breaker shall go up before them, and the King at the head of them—and they shall be brought again unto the inheritance of their fathers.

Even this will not exhaust the prophecy. I regard this passage as setting forth a vision of spiritual things in which Micah dimly saw the gathering together, and the heavenward march of the true Israel, namely, the elect of God, whom He has given to His Son Jesus, and whom the Lord Jesus has undertaken to save.

"He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart" (Rom 2:29). As Paul, by the Spirit of God, interprets the whole story of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is clear that we, brethren, the children of the promise, are the true seed, even those who are born by divine power, and as believers, are the *spiritual* family of believing Abraham.

If we have the faith of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham—and with us is the covenant made—for the seed of Abraham is not reckoned according to descent by the flesh, else would the covenant blessing have fallen to Ishmael and not to Isaac, to Esau and not to Jacob.

The covenant is to a spiritual seed, born according to divine promise through divine power. The line in which the Lord has determined that the covenant blessing should run was ordered by divine sovereignty "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." The Lord purposed that they which are born after the Spirit should be the true heirs, and not those that are born after the flesh.

We, therefore, believe that to us, even to us who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, appertain the promises and the covenant. It shall come to pass that all the elect of God shall yet

be gathered together from the places whereto they have wandered in their sin, and for them a clear way shall be opened up to the land of their inheritance.

The Breaker, who is also their King and God, shall lead them through all opposition, and bring them without fail to their quiet resting place. Even as at the first all Israel was brought out of Egypt, and safely led with a high hand and an outstretched arm through sea and desert, so shall the Lord Jesus lead the whole host of His redeemed to the place of His glory.

Has not the Lord God declared it—"The redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"?

An august spectacle is set before us in our text. May our eyes be anointed of the Holy Spirit that we may behold its glories, so that our hearts shall leap for joy!

First, in the text I see *the flock gathered*—"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men."

Secondly, we behold *the champion Shepherd clearing the way of the flock*—"The breaker is come up before them." He, with the arm of His strength, breaks all opposers, and breaks up for them a way from their captivity.

Thirdly, behold *the flock advancing*, with their great Shepherd at their head—"They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD at the head of them." JEHOVAH leads the van, and the hosts of His redeemed march triumphantly after Him.

I. To begin then, brethren—here is THE FLOCK GATHERED—"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee."

Who knows where God's chosen are? Babylon was far off from Jerusalem, but our places of wandering are farther off from God than that. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." In the cloudy and dark day, we have wandered to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord's chosen ones lie wide of one another, and they are far off from God Himself.

What a mercy it is that in the text we have a promise that they shall be gathered *divinely*! "*I* will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; *I* will surely gather the remnant of Israel." Who else could gather them but the Lord? What power less than divine could fetch such wanderers from their haunts and hidings?

One is aloft yonder on the hillside in his pride and self-conceit. Another is down below in the despondency of his disappointment. One wanders in the pastures of worldliness, sporting himself in the plenty thereof, and hard to be brought back for that reason. Another is entangled in the briars of poverty, half-starved and ready to die, and hopeless of ever seeing the face of God with joy.

They are everywhere, my brethren—these lost sheep. They seem to have chosen out, as if deliberately, the most dangerous places. They stumble on the dark mountains, they are caught in the tangled thickets, they have fallen into pits. O sin, what have you done? Rather, what have you not done? For men seem to have gone to the utmost extreme of rebellion against God, and to have done evil with both hands earnestly.

Therefore does God Himself come to the rescue. He Himself shall assemble Jacob, and gather the remnant of Israel. Driving with the terrors of His law, drawing with the sweetness of His Gospel, He shall surely bring them in. By one instrumentality or by another, and in some cases, apparently, without instrumentality at all, He will bring them from all points of the compass to the place where He will meet with them.

"There is a period known to God,
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,

Turn to the fold, and enter in."

This is the result of the divine working, and of that alone. Our hope for the salvation of God's elect lies in the fact that it is God Himself who undertakes to gather them. Remember His Word by the prophet Ezekiel—"For thus saith the LORD God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."

Following the text closely, we notice that this gathering is to be performed *surely*. I dwell with great pleasure upon that word "surely," because it is spoken twice, "I will *surely* assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will *surely* gather the remnant of Israel." There are no "ifs" where there is a God. There are no "peradventures" where divine predestination rules the day.

Let JEHOVAH speak, and it is done. Let Him command, and it shall stand firm. Inasmuch as He says "surely," *twice*, it reminds me of Joseph's word to the Egyptian king—"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God." God will not change His purpose, nor turn from His promise, nor forget His covenant—He will surely gather together His chosen people wherever they may be.

O you that are buffeted by opposition, and driven to sore distress in your holy service, be not you dismayed, for the purpose of the Lord shall stand. *You* may fail, but the eternal God will not. Your work may be washed away like the work of little children in the sand of the seashore, but that which God does endures forever.

God shakes the earth out of its place, but who can move *Him*? When God says *surel*y, who shall cast doubt in the way? The Lord will, without fail, call out His redeemed from among men. As a worker and a soul-winner I grasp at these words, "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," and I feel that I shall not labor in vain, nor spend my strength for nought.

When the end comes, and the whole business of salvation shall be complete, it shall be seen that the Lord has achieved His purpose. Jesus says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and it shall surely be so. Wherefore let us be of good courage, and seek out the lost ones in full confidence that they must and shall be found.

This leads us to notice that they shall be gathered *completely*. "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all of thee*." Not some of the chosen, but all of them shall be brought out from the world which lies in the wicked one. Not some of the redeemed, but each one of them shall be made to walk at liberty under the leadership of their Shepherd-King. The Lord will leave none of His sheep in their wanderings, and surrender none to the lion or the bear.

Dear friend, sighing and crying afar off, and thinking that God will never gather you, have faith in Him. Helpless as you are, trust Him to do His work as a Savior. It is written, "I will surely gather, O Jacob, all of thee," and you may not think that you have wandered beyond the reach of the infinite arm. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? You must not dream that you have sinned yourself beyond the power of grace, for His mercy endures forever!

Only look unto Christ, and let your soul stay itself on Him, and God will not overlook you in the day when He gathers His own. Though you be least in Israel, and most unworthy of His regard, yet He has expressly said, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." He will not forget you, you weakest of all the flock. You are necessary to the completeness of the company. If you be not there, how shall the Lord keep His Word, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee"?

Further, our text declares that the people shall be gathered *unitedly*. There shall be a wonderful union among them—"I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Oh that the Lord would in these days more fully and evidently carry out this promise in the happy unity of His visible church! Sinners hate each other while they wander in their different ways, but when the Lord brings them together by His grace, then love is born in their hearts.

What enmities are cast out by the power of divine grace! When lusts are conquered, wars and fightings cease. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. It is grace which causes that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. I notice that sinners, when they are under conviction of sin, are not apt to quarrel with one another—and saints—when they behold the Savior and rejoice in pardoning love, come together in holy love.

In that visible community which stands for the church of God—I mean the combined external organization of Christendom—there are many divisions and fierce heart-burnings. But in the real church of God, that spiritual body which the Holy Spirit inhabits, these evils are buried. The truly spiritual are really one in heart.

You may meet with a man from whom you differ in many respects, but if the life of God is in him, and in yourself also, you will feel a kinship with him of the nearest kind. Often have I read books which have awakened in my soul a sense of true brotherhood with their authors, although I have known them to be of a church opposed to many of my own views. If they praise my divine Lord, if they speak of the inner life, and touch upon communion with God, and if they do this with that unction and living power which are the tokens of the Holy Spirit, then my heart cleaves to them, be they who they may. Is it not so with you?

When the Lord brings people to Himself, He brings them to one another. Though depraved nature divides, and pride and self set men apart, yet the Lord overcomes these dividing elements by His renewing grace—and His divine Word is accomplished—"I will put them together!" When the Lord puts us together, no man can put us asunder.

What is wanted in the much-divided visible church of God is that we should all come under the divine hand more fully—that we should all feel the touch of the divine life, and yield ourselves more completely to the teaching of the divine truth. Schemes of union are of small value—it is the spirit of union which is wanted.

Our Lord Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," and His prayer cannot fall to the ground. The church is one in Christ, and none can tear the seamless vesture. Yet more openly as the days pass on, the Lord will gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

This gathering together will be done *happily*—they are to be gathered "as the flock in the midst of their fold." God's gathering of His chosen is not to a place of barrenness and misery, but to a place of security and quietude, even to His appointed fold. The Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters. He folds His flock, and makes it to lie down in peace.

He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He gives us all things richly to enjoy. O you that are wandering afar from God, there can be no rest for you until the Lord gathers you to the fold of which Jesus is the center and the Shepherd. When you come to Jesus you shall find rest unto your souls, but not till then.

"The peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus," but by Christ Jesus only. Christians are not a miserable company of restless spirits. They are not a pack of dogs howling at one another, and smarting under the keeper's lash—but they are a flock feeding in happy communion, while Jesus in their midst finds for them a place where they may rest at noon. He so loves His own, and so reveals Himself to His own, that they are a happy people, highly favored, and greatly honored. God has blessed them, and they shall be blessed, let the world say what it will concerning them.

One more note must be made on this head—they shall be gathered *numerously*—"They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." The Lord's camp is very great. If you have taken into your head the idea that the Lord has chosen for Himself a very small company, and that in the end there will be only a few saved, dismiss the notion. The redeemed are a number that no man can number.

Now, a man can count to a very great extent, and if the chosen are beyond the numbering of men, they are a multitude indeed. The prophet represents them as making a great noise by reason of their multitude. He alludes to "the busy hum of men," the buzz of the crowd as when the bees are swarming. As in a city there is an indescribable sound by reason of the multitude who are making traffic in it, so shall there be a noise in the church of a great concourse of men.

Conceive of the noise heard at Bozrah, in the sheep country of Edom, when all the flocks of the country were gathered together to be numbered for the purposes of tribute. Listen to the indescribable noise of the bleating myriads. What a suggestion of the voices of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed when they shall finally be brought together, and shall all in fullest joy lift up their voices!

If all the gathered-out company were to pray together, what a sound of supplication would go up by reason of the multitude of men! But when they all sing—what a sound shall that be! Do you wonder that John said, "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder"?

It makes my eyes water to think of the incomparable armies of the redeemed gathered together in one place. Well might the prophet turn poet when he began to picture that countless flock, and speak of the "great noise by reason of the multitude of men"! I believe we shall not any one of us restrain our voices in that day when we shall meet together with our Lord at our head.

I saw one stand up at the opening of this service to look around the Tabernacle, to see the multitude—and well he might—for it is a thing to do one's eyes good to behold this vast assembly. But what shall be our joy when we shall stand up in the midst of the great company of the redeemed? We shall look far and wide, and see no end of the great gathering.

When they begin to sing, how will our spirits bear the swell of that majestic Psalmody? I know I shall find my best voice that day, when in the midst of the congregation of the faithful I shall sing praise unto the Lord my God. The "great noise by reason of the multitude of men" sets forth the enthusiasm of the praise, and the immense number of the perfected ones who shall pour out their hearts before the throne.

Thus have I set before you, in a feeble way, the gathering of the flock.

II. Follow me while, next, I speak of THE CHAMPION SHEPHERD clearing the way.

"The breaker is come up before them." In the tenth verse the Lord says to His people, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." But we say to ourselves—How are they to depart from the place where they now are, and press forward to the pastures on the hilltops of heaven? They are as sheep. How can they find their way? How can they face their foes? How can they break down barriers?

A flock is ill-fitted to tramp over pathless deserts, infested by ferocious wolves. How shall the church attain to the abodes of the perfected? Long leagues of distance must be traversed, hills of guilt must be crossed, and nights of blackest darkness must be experienced. Ah, Lord God! How can You expect that this Your church, which is like a flock of sheep, should find its way through all difficulties and adversaries unto Yourself?

The answer to our fears is before us—"The breaker is come up before them." That great Shepherd of the sheep, whose name is "The Through-breaker," or "The Breaker-up," makes a way for His people, yea, creates it by force of arms.

Between us and heaven once lay the tremendous Alps of sin. Not one of all the flock of God could climb those hills. All must perish who attempt to cross those awful barriers. The way to heaven was effectually blocked by these heaven-defying mountains, for no passes existed—even the eagle's eyes could not discover a way.

One sin might keep a man out of heaven, but the multitudes of our iniquities, the blackness, the aggravation, the repetition of our offenses made the case hopeless to all human power or wisdom. I see those awful hills, and wonder how the flock of God can hope to reach eternal bliss with those in the way.

Behold He comes, "The breaker," before whom the mountains sink. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and by that bearing he put them all away." He took upon Himself the whole load of His people's iniquities. He endured the entire weight of the crushing burden, and by His atoning death He cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea.

The pass of the atonement is our clear way to glory. In the sepulchre of Jesus all our sins are buried. To as many as believe in Jesus Christ no sin remains.

"This Breaker once made sin to be,
Broke from the curse His people free.
He broke the power of death and hell,
And cleared the road for Israel."

"In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The glorious Breaker, with His pierced hands, and nailed feet, and opened side, has wrought a miracle of miracles by putting away sin through the sacrifice of Himself.

Jesus says, "I am the way"—and the way He is—the way which neither past nor present sin can effectually close. But my brethren, if our sins were all forgiven us, there are other difficulties in the way. For we are without strength, and the depravity of our nature is not readily overcome. Think of the hardness of our hearts, the waywardness of our wills, the blindness of our judgments, the readiness of our minds to yield to temptation! How can we force our way through such obstacles?

Why, if the Lord would forgive me all my sin, and give me heaven on condition that I should find my way to it, mine would still be a hopeless case. Even the regenerate find that they have a hard struggle with the flesh—how can we win our way in the teeth of our fallen nature?

Beloved, the Breaker has gone up before us. The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our nature, and was "tempted in all points like as we are." He overcame the adversary at every point of the conflict, that through His victory we might be more than conquerors. He sends forth the Holy Spirit to renew us in the spirit of our minds. He takes the stony heart out of our flesh. He rules the will, He governs the affections, He enlightens the understanding, He sanctifies the soul.

And thus, though weak in ourselves, we are made strong in Him—so strong that we shall not perish in the wilderness, but shall pursue our pilgrimage till we cross the Jordan, and stand in our lot at the end of the days. Because the Breaker has gone up before us, we shall break through the ramparts of sinfulness, and cut our way to holiness and perfection.

Yet, even though this is so, that sin is forgiven and our corrupt nature overcome—still there is another difficulty—the prince of darkness has set himself to obstruct the way. He defies us to advance—he stands across the road, and swears that he will spill our souls. By no means let us be afraid, for the Breaker is gone up before us, and the enemy knows the force of His strong right hand.

In the wilderness and in the garden, our Lord vanquished this great adversary, and therein gave us full assurance that He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We need not fear all the devils in hell—if by faith we have courage to resist them, they will flee from us. We shall reach the haven of our rest, the heaven of our bliss.

Our glorious Breaker, with the mace of the cross, has broken the head of leviathan, and made an open show of His adversaries. Thus was it spoken of our LORD at the gates of Eden concerning the old serpent—"Thou shalt bruise his heel." And now by His ascension to heaven, He has done the deed, leading captivity captive.

"Gone up as God's co-equal Son,
With all His blood-stained garments on,
While seraphs sing His deathless fame,
And chant the Breaker's glorious name."

This brings us face to face with the last enemy. Death blocks the way to eternal life. Be of good courage, the Breaker has gone up before you in this matter also. Jesus died—the Ever-blessed bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. Hearken yet again—He has risen from the dead. He slept a while in the cold prison of the tomb, but He could not be held with the bands of death, and therefore in due time He arose.

He arose in newness of life that all His own might also rise in Him. Come, be not afraid to die, for you will travel a well-beaten track. Be not afraid to go down into the heart of the earth, for there your Emmanuel has slept. Nor will He suffer you to go by this dark road alone. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He will go down into this Egypt with you, and He will surely bring you up again. The breaker goes up before you.

But can I hope I shall ever enter the gates of heaven? Those gates of pearl whose mild, pure radiance chides my perturbed and guilty heart—can I hope to pass their portal? Can I hope to stand where all is absolutely perfect? I shrink in the presence of such matchless purity.

But brethren, the Breaker has gone up before us. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It will be safe for us to enter where He has gone—yea, we must enter—for where He is, there also shall His servants be. He will welcome each one of us with, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?"

Adown those streets of pure gold like unto transparent glass we shall walk without fear, and up to that blazing throne of purest light we shall pass without dismay, for Jesus has gone in before us. Behold Him!

"He is at the Father's side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified."

The way into the Holiest is now made manifest. The Breaker has rent the veil from the top to the bottom, and given us free access to heaven itself.

But I must pause. Certainly my matter is not exhausted—time alone restrains.

III. Lastly, I have to show you for a minute or two THE FLOCK ADVANCING, their royal Breaker leading the way.

As the Lord Jesus, in His death, resurrection, and ascension, has gone up before us, so by His grace we are led to follow Him from grace to glory. "They go from strength to strength." He says to them, "Follow me"—they know His voice—and as His sheep, they follow Him.

Along the way which the great Champion clears, we find the whole of the flock proceeding. "The breaker is come up before them," therefore they keep to His footprints. "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." Behold, my brethren, the vision of visions—the whole company of God's elect following their triumphant Leader!

Do you see yonder the pillar of fire and cloud leading the way through the desert? Do you see the host of Israel in glorious order marching to their predestined inheritance? Such is the church of God as it is seen by spiritual eyes. All down the centuries, in every land they are marching along that appointed road which Jesus, the Breaker, has cleared for them.

You and I, I hope, are in that goodly company—sometimes our following is lame and halting, but yet we are not turned out of the way. To whom else could we go if we were to leave our chosen Leader? Faint we may be, but pursuing we will be. Oh, that we could keep closer to the Breaker! Oh, that He would break our hearts with His love! Oh, that all our evil habits might be broken by His grace.

We would follow our King whithersoever He goes. Yes, we are in that company, I trust, and God grant we may never stray from it! No other road is prepared by a great Breaker as this road is prepared. This is the King's highway, and we will keep to it all our days.

Observe, that in the text the people of God are described as imitating their king, for it is written, "They have broken up." He is the Breaker, and are they breakers too? Yes, they also have broken up. Christ is the great warrior for His people, but not without conflict will any one of them be crowned. It is

so arranged in the wisdom of God that everything is so done for us as not to drive us into inaction, but to draw us into holy diligence.

Christ's warfare is repeated in His saints in their measure. The crown is of grace, but we must run for it. Christ has conquered sin, and we have to overcome through faith in Him. He has subdued the adversary, but we also shall have to wrestle with spiritual wickedness.

"They have broken up." Herein is condescending love. Christ might have saved us, and there might have been nothing for us to do, but to display His grace, He intends to conform us to Himself, in conflict and in crown, in breaking up, and in going forth, and in entering in. He makes us know the fellowship of His sufferings.

Come, brethren and sisters, let us ask God to fulfill in us the words of the text, "They have broken up." Let us be resolved to break down all sin. Let us be determined to overcome through the blood of the Lamb. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. If we have it, let us use it to good purpose this day.

Notice that as these people were led on by the Breaker—they persevered in following Him. "They have broken up; they have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." They did a little at a time. They advanced step by step. They stopped at nothing, but went onward and upward. So do saints go from grace to grace, from faith to greater faith.

Note the sentences—"They have broken up, they have passed through the gate, and have gone out by it"—this looks as if they did it slowly but surely, gradually but grandly. So, when the grace of God enters into the heart, and we, the sheep of God, are made to follow Him, we are attentive to detail, and notice each part of our obedience.

You cannot, in grace, any more than in anything else, do a great deal at once, and do it effectually. I find that advance in grace, if it is suppositious, can be rapid. But if it be real, it requires patience. Our Lord gives us line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little, and there a little. Let us be sure even if we be slow.

But now I would have you dwell upon the fact that they are marching under royal leadership—"Their King shall pass before them." Christ is always at the head of His own church. Why? because He loves it so that He cannot be away from it. He is at the head of His own flock, because He has purchased it with His own blood.

He will not send an angel to lead His chosen, but He Himself will watch over the objects of His everlasting love. He knows the necessities of His church to be such as He, and only He, can meet. Therefore, as the King, He always remains at their head.

Brethren, let us always reverence, honor, and obey Him. Our active, present King must be loyally and earnestly served. As Breaker, He did us service. As King we must render Him service. Remember how the Psalmist put it to the chosen bride—"He is thy Lord, worship thou him." As a church, we know no other Head. As the people of His pasture, we know no other Leader. Let us follow Him boldly and gladly.

Let us give Him praise this day, yea, let us worship and adore Him, for He is JEHOVAH. He who is at our head is Lord. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Is it not written, "The LORD shall go before thee"? Let us rejoice because the Lord is our King, and He will save us.

Do you ever fear that the cause of truth and righteousness will fail? Shake this dust from off thee. Banish such a thought. If JEHOVAH leads the van, who shall stand against Him? If Jesus Christ, once the man of sorrows, but now the King of kings, is to the fore, He will reckon with our adversaries, and make short work of their boastings.

Wherefore, follow quietly and unquestioningly as sheep follow the shepherd, and your way shall be prosperous. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge—wherefore comfort one another with these words.

I cannot express the joy I feel in the belief that I am one of the company which is following the Breaker's lead. But my sorrow is that some of you are not of His flock. Oh, that you may belong to those

of whom He says, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” Oh, that He may bring you in speedily!

Do you feel a desire towards Christ this morning? Have you any longings to be reconciled to God by Him? Then you may freely come, with the confident assurance that him that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. He invites you to His cross, yea, to Himself. Obey the gentle impulse which is now stirring your bosom. Jesus has come on purpose to seek and to save the lost—you are lost—therefore pray that He may save you.

Should the enemy of all good tell you that if you should believe, yet you would never hold out to the end, remind him that the Breaker has gone up before His people, and their king at the head of them, and therefore you are not afraid of meeting anything upon the road which can beat you back from hope and heaven.

Join the army which marches under our victorious Joshua—and through sin, and hell, and death the Breaker will clear your way. To Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 40:1-10 AND 43:14-21

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—306, 372, 313

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.