

THE UNCHANGING GOD CHEERING JACOB IN HIS CHANGE OF DWELLING PLACE NO. 2116

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 1, 1889,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God, the God of your father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation: I will go down with you into Egypt; and I will also surely bring you up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes.”
Genesis 46:1-4.

NOTICE in this passage the two names which are mentioned. “Israel took his journey, and God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob.” “Jacob” was the name of his weakness—“Israel” was the title of his strength. “Jacob” was the name of his birth-nature—“Israel” was the name of his new and spiritual nature. When Israel set out to go down into Egypt, and see his son Joseph, he started in great vigor and strength for an old man—faith made him full of force. Therefore we read, “Israel took his journey.” I see the old man revived and stirred up to a high degree of hopeful energy; he traveled some few miles on the first day, and reached the well of Beersheba. It was the border town, where stood the well of the oak—after passing Beersheba he would be out of the land of promise, and on his way to Egypt; and at the remembrance of this fact, the old trembling came over him, and he became Jacob, as at some prior time. When he was to take the decisive step to leave Canaan, and make his journey into Egypt, then he suddenly felt himself a Jacob, and began to halt upon his thigh; and the Lord in the visions of the night addressed him by the name which was most suitable to his condition, saying to him, “Jacob, Jacob.” He did not call him “Israel.” He came to him in his infirmity and trial, and suited His speech to his condition. The Lord met the weakness of His servant’s faith, and sent him consolations fitted rather for Jacob than for Israel. Dear friends, I am afraid that the lives of many of the Lord’s chosen people alternate between “Israel” and “Jacob”; sometimes we are “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”; and at another time we cry, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Like princes we prevail with God, and are true Israels; but perhaps before the sun has gone down we limp with Jacob, and though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. We are Jacob before we are Israel; and we are Jacob when we are Israel. But blessed be God, we are Israels with God when we cease to be Jacobs among men. The Lord has chosen Jacob, and redeemed Jacob, and preserved Jacob; but His great aim is to make the Israel in him the dominant character. He shall be far more a prince with God than a supplanter among men.

Turning to the text, we have a lesson to learn from it. We find that Jacob, on his way down to Egypt, came to Beersheba, the border place, and this marked a distinct stage in his journey. He came to Beersheba, the place of many memories, where God had spoken to his father Abraham by the well. This was the place, I suppose, where Abraham was when the Lord said to him, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a burnt offering.” It was, therefore, a memorable spot in the history of his family, and it was just then a turning point in his own career; and therefore it called for special waiting upon the Lord. He was to break new ground, and enter upon a way which he had not trod up to now; and so we read that he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Herein is wisdom. In commencing a new era, let there be new devotion. It is well to begin everything with God, who is the Beginner of all things. When young people begin housekeeping, they should consecrate an altar as soon as ever they have set up a tent; when you begin business, this thought should be upon you—“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Therefore, wait upon Him for guidance and help.

In starting upon every journey, whether long or short, and entering upon every day, however commonplace the day may be, it is always well to begin it with God. Remember the old and gracious proverb, that “prayer and provender hinder no man’s journey.” The offering of sacrifices unto God did not hinder Jacob’s journey—on the contrary, it was the making of him as a traveler; for now he began his journey outside of Canaan under the special convoy of the Lord, his God. Now the angels of God took up their places around the wayfarers, and day and night they led the van, and brought up the rear of the patriarchal caravan.

I suppose that Jacob, on this occasion, offered sacrifice for three reasons, at least. One was to purge his household of any sin that might lie upon it. He had a very strange family, this man Jacob. It was badly begun at the outset, of four mothers—and jealousies were sure to abound. Taking them all round, his many sons were a very sad lot to be the sons of such a man. His own account of them on his deathbed is most painful. Much sin, even of the blackest dye, had defiled that chosen family. The stories of Reuben, Levi, Simeon, Judah, and others, are very dark. The aged head of the clan seems to say, with broken-hearted penitence, “Before we go down into this Egypt, let us offer sacrifice whereby our grievous sins may be put away, lest we provoke the Lord on the road.” It reminds us of father Job, when, after his children had fulfilled their days of feasting, he called them together and offered sacrifices, lest they might have sinned in their hearts, and cursed God foolishly. How often have we cause to suspect some secret backsliding, some careless omission, some transgression unperceived! It is well to go again to the cleansing fountain for fresh washing, to fly anew to the great sacrifice of Christ, and renew our acquaintance with its cleansing power. O Lord, purify our households at this hour! Let our families and our churches know anew the expiation for sin by which the conscience is purged from dead works, to serve the living and true God.

Do you not think that Jacob also offered this sacrifice for another reason? Did he not present it by way of thanksgiving? He is going down into Egypt—but it is to see Joseph—what a joy this meant! Joseph is yet alive! He is going to look him in the face. Benjamin of whom the old man had said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away”; Benjamin had come back safe and sound—this was no mean favor. Whereas he had said, “All these things are against me,” now he perceives that all these things are for him. And so he offers sacrifice unto the Lord. Let us magnify the Lord whenever we are led to see the extraordinary light of His goodness in those places which looked unusually dark. When the cloud we so much dreaded has turned out to be big with mercies, and has scattered showers of blessings upon our heads, let us bless the Lord, and bring our sacrifices of joy and praise unto His name.

Surely, these two alone would be right good reasons for offering sacrifice; but Jacob had this other—that he might inquire of the Lord as to His way. At the altar he hoped to receive the oracle. Poor old Jacob appears to have been in a great dilemma—he seems to have greatly questioned whether it was right for him to go down into Egypt; and, as I shall have to show you, it was a matter that was open to grave question, and could not have been safely decided unless the Lord had spoken. It was the custom with men, when they offered sacrifice, to use the occasion of the sacrifice as an opportunity for consulting the oracles of God, and learning His divine will. People went up to the temple of the Lord to inquire His mind—they went to ask direction from God’s mouth, through His servants—who spoke in His name. I wish sometimes that God’s people would be more careful to ask their way of God. I fear that they too often err by blundering on, and taking no heed to their way. When I get into a part of the country where I do not know the road, I ask my way of almost everybody I see, because I think that there will not be half the time spent in asking the way that will be wasted in going wrong. The Lord loves to see His children anxious to be right; for that anxiety is a great point in their right guidance. If He does not speak to us in a dream, nor by the Urim and Thummim, nor by the voice of a prophet, yet He secretly guides our minds. We are made careful—we are helped to weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary, and then our cool, calm judgment makes its decisions, and we choose the way which is most for God’s glory. It is a safe and a pleasant thing to inquire in His temple; for God the Holy Spirit still directs the paths of His people, and leads them in the way everlasting.

So let us learn from Jacob, especially at the beginning of any fresh enterprise, to draw near unto God with special devotion. We cannot too often remember that great Sacrifice by which we live—neither can we too often present ourselves as living sacrifices unto the Lord.

But now, plunging into the center of the text, I notice, first, that Jacob had a fear. His fear was natural. But, secondly, his fear needed to be removed, for God said to him, “Fear not to go down into Egypt.” And, thirdly, his fear was removed most sweetly; and with confidence, the venerable man went on his way.

I. First, then, JACOB’S FEAR WAS NATURAL. It was natural because he was an aged man—an aged man leaving the land of his birth. Old men do not like changes, and they especially fear changes of country and custom. A young man runs all over the world, and cares little where he goes, for he has plenty of youth’s quicksilver in him. He cries, “Sitting hens get no barley”—and so he pecks up a grain here, and a grain there, from Liverpool to New York, and from New York to San Francisco, and from there to New Zealand, the Cape, and home again. The young man makes himself at home anywhere; but the old man loves the old house at home, and the fireside where his children have been likely to gather. Old trees strike their roots deep, and it is not easy to transplant them. It is neither pleasant nor safe to uproot an ancient elm—let it stay where it is. Solomon says concerning the old man that he is “afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way”; and it is very natural, indeed, that the man should feel a great disturbance in his mind at the sight of high enterprises and untrod ways. Was not Jacob one hundred and thirty years old, or thereabouts, at the time when he went down into Egypt? He had lived in the pastures of Canaan with his flocks and herds, the life of a Bedouin shepherd, and his whole soul clung to the country; for “Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.” The oaks and the plains of Mamre, the hills of Carmel, and the valleys of Succoth were dear to him, and he started at the idea of immigrating to a land of canals and watercourses, and he dreaded life among educated Egyptians and pompous officers of Pharaoh. It was no slight change from Canaan to Egypt. Do you wonder that he was afraid?

His fear also, no doubt, arose, next, from the fact that he was going into an idolatrous country of which he knew very little, except that it was a place which teemed with the memorials of false deities; a land of religion so degraded that cats and crocodiles were worshipped and even vegetables which grew in the gardens. An Egyptian must have been a living riddle to an unsophisticated shepherd from such a country as Palestine. Egypt had a reputation for learning, and philosophy, and divination; and these, to an aged countryman, would seem mysterious and uncanny features in his venture. He loved not the change. The Canaanites were bad enough; but he had grown accustomed to them, and they had a healthy fear of him—these Egyptians, what might they not do? He *was* encouraged, because Joseph was there, and was lord over all Egypt—even *that* was a very romantic affair, and the whole business was surrounded with mystery.

Finally, the associations of Egypt were trying. It had cost the good old man many bitter pangs to send his sons down into that country to buy corn. Egypt had an ugly name for him. It was like sending them to Botany Bay, or Norfolk Island. Somehow, it was not a country that he had any liking for, and so Jacob’s heart was in his mouth; and he trembled to think that in his old age he should be going away from where he had lived, and especially to be going, not to the ancient country from where his family had originally come forth, but to Egypt, a place which was of ill savor to his fathers, a country whose associations were rather trying than hopeful.

Abraham went down into Egypt, and he met with trouble there, and brought away from it one named Hagar, who was a great trial in his household. In fact, it was the mischievous event in his life; and Isaac had thought of going there, but the Lord appeared unto him and said, “Go not down into Egypt.” So a country where his grandfather fared ill, and where his father was warned not to go, must have seemed, to the anxious patriarch, to be a place to be avoided rather than sought. He shook his head many times, and though he had said so bravely, “Joseph is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die,” the journey wore the aspect of great risk, and tremendous difficulty—with a question hanging over it like a black cloud—“After all, would it be a right step?” Taking all things into consideration, he was filled with a very natural, and I think I may add, a very proper fear. Would not you have trembled had you been in his position?

Moreover, he had some intimation, probably, that this was to be a land of pre-eminent trial for his race; for had not God said to Abraham that his seed should be strangers in a strange land, and that they should be afflicted for four hundred years? The old man, with prescient eye, began to suspect that this was to be the land which caused Abraham the horror of great darkness, which was set forth before him as the fiery furnace, and the smoking lamp; and so he was afraid to go down into Egypt. And even though Joseph was there, and Joseph was lord over all the land, I should not wonder if the old man was nervous, and said, "Joseph may not always be lord over the land—he may fall from his position. As far as I can find out, they put him in prison once; why should they not put him in prison again? I fear we shall run a great risk." When we once get into the vein of distrust and foreboding, we can always find fresh relays of doubt and fear—at least, I can. How quick we are at inventing objects of fear! We see in the clouds what was never there, but only in our own eyes. We see things which may be—things that never will be. We are fretted at possibilities, and ready to faint at adventures. Those dreadful things may be; and what if they were to be? What then; and what then?

Then I have no doubt he felt that the change would involve himself and his family in new temptations. They had behaved badly enough among the simple pastoral people—what would they do in the midst of the vices of Egypt? I must confess that I often feel great diffidence in recommending people to make changes in life—especially in quitting the country to go to the great city. Change has its perils. You begin to know your temptations by now, and you are somewhat prepared to withstand them; but you know not what may happen to you in another sphere, with other surroundings, and other influences. All things considered, I would rather carry my old burden; for it begins to fit my back, and my back has grown somewhat used to it; but what about a new burden? It might be heavier, and it might try me in fresh places, and cause fresh wounds; for myself, I am not anxious to make any changes, for I have read the words of Solomon the wise—"As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." When *God* commands a man to follow an untried path, he may go rightly and wisely, even as the young swallows fly in their appointed time, though they have never traversed the continents before; but he who wanders out of sheer wantonness may find that he has gone from bad to worse, and may come to wish himself back again to that which he despised. If Jacob trembled at making so great a change, it was not without reason. All the habits of the family would be rudely shaken, and a new mode of life would be forced upon them. He could not have guessed that there would be a Goshen for the shepherds, and he must have dreaded leaving a quiet pastoral life for the refinements of Egyptian society, and the blandishments of Egyptian idolatry.

I need say no more on that point—Jacob was always anxious, and in his old age, more so than ever. The sketch I have given may be the picture of some friend now present; and if it is so, I will hope that in my discourse he may hear cheering voices from the Lord God to allay his fears. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, make it so!

II. But, in the second place, God was not of a mind that His servant should be the slave of dread—**HIS FEAR WAS TO BE REMOVED.** Therefore, the Lord appeared to Jacob in the night visions, not to tell him of new empires, not to reveal to him the destinies of princes, but simply to say to him, "Fear not." It appears to God to be an important matter to chase away fear, even though it is troubling only one person, and that person an aged man. The Lord broke the eternal silence, to drive away the anxieties of a single individual. He said to him, "Jacob, Jacob." And then he added, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Are you very fearful and timorous at this time, dear brother? It is not the Lord's will that you should remain so—He would deliver you from this bondage.

The Lord would drive away your fears because, in the first place, fear makes you unhappy. It is an unhappy thing for a father when he comes home from business, and finds his child in distress of mind. He likes to see him run cheerfully to meet him, and smile and sing a welcome. Our heavenly Father would have His people rejoice in Him. Do you want any proof of it? Does He not command you, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice"? The Lord puts it thus, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." The Spirit made the prophet exclaim, "Happy are you, O Israel." God takes it ill if His people find no joy in Him. He is our portion, and it is sad if we are not delighted with such an inheritance.

But, next, the Lord would not have His people vexed with fear, because it is sadly weakening in its effects. Jacob had a difficult task enough, to go down into Egypt and bear witness for the true God in that region, and he needed more, rather than less, strength. In the midst of Canaan, his path had been a very difficult one, to stand fast for God in the midst of that wicked and perverse generation. He had sadly failed even in that lesser task, for his family had grossly transgressed, and fallen into the ways of the world around them. In Egypt his work would be more severe; for he would have the wisdom of the Egyptians to battle with; wisdom proudly conservative of errors which had become hoary with antiquity. He must not go down to such a battlefield with his hands hanging down and his knees feeble. Before we begin a new enterprise, fear may be seasonable—we ought to be cautious as to whether our way is right in the sight of God; and therefore Jacob had that fear; but when we once begin, and intend going through with an enterprise, we must say farewell to fear, for fear will be fatal to success. Go straight ahead. Believe in God, and carry the work through; to fear in the day of battle will be mischievous to the last degree. Then shall it be as when a standard bearer faints. When the standard of our confidence falls in the dust, who shall gird himself for the battle? Therefore the Lord, that His servant Jacob might be fit for what was before him, bade him be of good courage, and said to him, “Fear not.”

I am sure that the Lord wished His servant Jacob to cease from every kind of fear, because otherwise it would look as if he were quarrelling with the divine will. He is to go down into Egypt by divine command; but if he is afraid to go, it would appear that he judged that the Lord had put him upon an ill business. When God judged it right for him to go, he must rest assured that it was right. Hesitate, my dear friend, while you are not sure that it is God’s will; but when once you are certain that it is according to the Lord’s mind, it will be unfaithfulness to God to have any kind of fear! Steam straight ahead, for that way lies your haven. Go on in a direct line, like an arrow shot from a mighty bow, which seeks nothing but the target. Say with one of old, “Shall such a man as I flee?” If God is with you, who can be against you? Flight, when God supports, would be not only disastrous, but treacherous; it is not to be dreamed of for a moment. You have no armor for your back—face the foe—yes, *face* him, though he were ten thousand strong. You are able to overcome the armies of the aliens; God being with you, the day is yours. If you treat the Lord as you should, you will become incapable of fear. You will, like young Nelson, ask, “What is fear?” You cannot see any. “The Lord is my strength; of whom shall I be afraid?” The Lord of hosts is with us, therefore we will not fear.

Perhaps I might as well apply the subject now and say—Are you beginning to preach, my dear friend, in a new place, and are you afraid? Do new faces startle you? Set yourself to get rid of this fear of man; for the Lord forbids it. Are you going across the sea directly, and are you afraid of the journey, and the foreign land? Hasten to the Lord, and ask Him to drive all this fear far from you. Are you undertaking some new service in the church, and are you trembling at the responsibility? Cry to the Lord at once to strengthen your weak hands, and confirm your feeble knees; for, at this moment, though the Lord does not appear to you in vision, yet He speaks to you out of this grand old Book, and by the mouth of His servant, saying unto you, “Fear not to go down into Egypt.” Surely, a “fear not” from the mouth of the Lord will make you bold as a lion!

III. And now I shall need to show you how HIS FEAR WAS REMOVED MOST SWEETLY. Who can cheer the heart as effectually as the Lord our God? Fears must depart when the Lord forbids them.

First, the Lord removed his fears by showing that He knew him by his name. He said “Jacob, Jacob.” “Oh,” says one, “if the Lord were to speak to me by my name, I should not be afraid any longer.” I am not sure of that, for you might be even more fearful than you now are; but do you think that God does not know your name? Do you dream that if you have sought His face, and cried to Him for mercy, He does not know your name? Why beloved, He knows all things; He knows your secret thoughts; He knows the way that you have taken, and the way that you are about to take. He knows you infinitely better than you know yourself. Rest in the fact that your heavenly Father knows what you need. O poor troubled one, you that are cast down on account of sin; remember that the Lord knew this patriarch by his weak and sinful name of Jacob, as well as by his bright and princely name of Israel! He knew him by his worse name as well as by his better. God knows you by your old name, for He knows your old nature; and He knows your new name, and your new nature. He calls you tonight, and tells you—“I know

you. I know you. I know all about you. Your name is engraved on the palms of My hands. Dream not that I have forgotten you; if you can not spell out your own case, I can read it; if you do not know your own griefs so as to interpret them to another, I understand all your sorrows, your burdens, and your failures. I know your despondencies, and your despairs. I know you, Jacob.” Therefore, since the Lord knows us altogether, let us trust Him, and He will make even our weaknesses to magnify the power of His grace.

Next, the Lord told him that he was on communion terms with God. The Lord said to him, “Jacob, Jacob,” and he answered, “Here am I.” God had to call out to Adam, “Adam, where are you?” But Jacob could say, “Here am I.” Oh, it is a blessed thing to be on such terms with God that you can truly say, “Here am I, my Lord—I have nothing to hide! I stand forth before Your presence, and have no desire to conceal myself from Your eyes; neither have I anything to reserve from Your notice. Tell me what I am to do; for I am willing and eager to do it. Take me and make what You will of me; for I am Yours, and rejoice to be so. Break me up, and melt me, and pour me out into Your mold, if You see fit; for ‘Here am I.’” He that has given up selfhood, and is willing that God should do whatever He wills with him, is on communing terms with God. The barrier is removed, and the Lord God Almighty can dwell with us, and even give us the desires of our heart; but then it follows—if you are on such happy terms with God, be not afraid. Now that you may speak with God, and He will deign to speak with you, why should you be the prey of apprehensions? Why should Jacob be afraid of Pharaoh if he is no longer afraid of Jehovah? If you are at peace with God, who is he that shall harm you? The stones of the field shall be in league with you, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. Hushed is the thunder, and pointless is the shaft of the lightning, when once a man is right with God. Even if the laws of nature should crush his mortal frame, they would but release his joyful spirit, and admit him the sooner to the joys of heaven above. Therefore you have nothing to be afraid of, O you who walk with God! If the Lord is your friend, who is he that can harm you? All is well. The stars in their courses fight for you, and the angels of God watch over you. To the friends of God all nature is friendly. Heaven and earth, and sea and land, all welcome the man on whom their Creator smiles.

Next, the Lord removed His servant’s fear by declaring Himself to be the God of the covenant. “I am God,” He said, “the God of your father.” He manifests Himself as the same God as ever—as much the God of Jacob, the son, as of Isaac, the father. The Lord will be to us what He has been to His people at some prior time. He has pledged Himself to us as to our fathers. He has promised to us, even to us, the blessing, saying, “Surely, blessing I will bless you.” My dear friends and brethren, can you say, “This God is our God forever and ever”? Is Jehovah the God of this generation as of the former? Some of you do not desire to have Jehovah for your God. Then you cannot have the blessing that comes from His being your God; but you that can say, “My God, my Father, You shall be my guide,” you have no cause to fear. If God is your God, the chief thing is secured, and all the rest will be right. When we have God, we have all things. To be in order with the Most High is to be right with all the forces of the universe, both in nature and in providence. If the Lord is yours, all things are yours. As He is the God of eternity, “things present and things to come are yours” in Him. Oh, how sweet to fly to our covenant God when the tempest is lowering! Where my father found a most secure abode, there I also dwell.

Next, the Lord said to him, “Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation.” The promise of a great blessing is the dismissal of all fear. Jacob’s house cannot be destroyed if God is going to multiply them into a great nation. If the apparent evil will work together for our good, why do we dread it? Beloved sufferer, do not be afraid of the cancer which is preying upon you; it is a terrible disease, but if the Lord is going to make your long illness a saving blessing to your family, you may resign yourself to the lingering pain, and no longer shrink from it with horror. Do not be afraid of that bereavement in the family; it will be a grievous loss to all concerned, but the righteous are taken away from evil to come, and out of their graves springs a blessing, even as the grass grows on the hill-ock in the churchyard. Many a keen affliction brings with it God’s sevenfold favor, though we cannot see it. As the Lord said to Jacob, “Fear not to go into Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation,” so He says to us, “Fear not affliction; for so shall you receive the greater benediction.” Brethren, fear not the night, but watch for its stars. Fear not the fall of the leaf, but look for the ripe fruits. You shall see

more of God's goodness as you see more of man's evil. We read of the apostles, that they "feared as they entered into the cloud." Yet in that cloud they saw their Lord transfigured! Therefore be not afraid, lest you be found trembling at that which should give you joy.

Then the Lord added that which is the richest comfort of all—"I will go down with you into Egypt." What cause of fear can remain when we have the promise of the Lord's presence with us? The child is not afraid to go to bed in the dark, if his mother will go with him into the chamber. The child does not need a candle if his mother will be at his side—her eyes are bright lights to him. If God is with us, we are not in the dark—His presence causes even the night to be light about us. If we can have our Lord's presence, we have no choice of country or company. Egypt, with Jehovah, is as Canaan. Even Hades and the land of death-shades have nothing to make us fear evil, if the Comforter sustains us! "For You are with me," is the joyful song of the pilgrim when he passes through the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, let us dismiss our fears. We will go down into loneliness, poverty, sickness, sorrow, and the grave, if the Lord will be with us.

The Lord goes on to say, "And I will also surely bring you up again"—which meant that Jacob should not lose his inheritance in Canaan, nor be forever in banishment in a strange land. Jacob's heart dwelt in the Canaan which the Lord had bestowed on him, and had entailed upon his seed by a covenant of salt; but Jacob's going down into Egypt was not to alter that deed of gift. Jacob would not have accepted Egypt, with all its treasures, in exchange for the land that God had promised to him and to his seed; but no such change was proposed—the chosen seed would leave Egypt in due course, and come back to its old quarters, and so the Lord said, "I will surely bring you up again." Go down as we may, the Lord will bring us up again. Dear friend, you may lose husband, or wife, or father, or child, or property, or health, or even life; but you shall rise out of every loss, and you shall never lose your share in the sure mercies of David. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Esau might sell the heritage for a mess of pottage, but Jesus would not sell His portion for all Egypt's glories; nor shall He be called on to make the exchange. Blessed be God, we shall never be driven down so low that we cannot rise again, for the Lord says of every member of the chosen family, "I will surely bring you up again!"

One more fear Jacob had, perhaps, experienced. He had some fear of dying; but that was all removed when the Lord said, "And Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes." "Oh," the good old father thought, "Joseph is to close my eyes! Then death has lost its sting." Did you ever think of dying in that light? Let me read it to you with a word changed, and another name inserted—"And Jesus shall put His hand upon your eyes." We may never die—the Lord may personally appear, and then we shall not all sleep; but if He does not come, and we are called upon to die, Jesus will put His fingers on our eyes, and we shall sleep in peace. Death is a covenant blessing to a child of God; for "so He gives His beloved sleep." That last sleep comes from the finger of that hand which was nailed to the cross for us. And Jesus, your Joseph whom you love, whose bloody coat you have seen with tears—He is yet alive, and He is King over all that land where you go, for the keys of death swing at His girdle. He is the Prince of all realms, and He it is that shall put His hand upon your eyes, and seal them for the moment in darkness, to open them for you, when you shall say, "I am satisfied, for behold I awake in Your likeness."

By this time, every fear ought to be removed from us, even as it was from Jacob. We may now set up our banners and go forward; put away the sackbut, and sound the silver trumpet. Let the vanguard advance, and follow the leader through the wilderness, or through the sea. If Jehovah leads the way, let no man's heart tremble. Let the weakest among us be strong—for thus says the Lord, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Rejoice and be glad. All is well—

*"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time and to eternal days,
It is with the righteous well.
It is well when joys arise,
It is well when sorrows flow,
It is well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.*

*It is well when on the mount
We feast on dying love;
And 'tis as well, in God's account,
When we the furnace prove."*

The pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day, we see at all times. Thus Jehovah leads the way in every march through the desert. With glad footstep, follow Him! Behold, He says to you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with you, and I will surely bring you up again."

Surely, this passage is very applicable to all who are removing from one place to another. "Fear not to go down into Egypt. I will go down with you into Egypt." Take your journey in peace.

This also may be used by those who are in perplexity as to what they should do. Wait upon God for direction, and when you get your marching orders, go straight ahead, cheered by this gracious assurance, "I will go down with you into Egypt."

Any of you that are entering upon a new business, upon new trials, new labors, and new spheres—accept with joy the promise that the presence of God will be with you. God leading, we fear nothing.

Lastly, to you that are about to die, here is living consolation. There may be some here who will never see another earthly Sabbath, for God has some better thing in store for them, namely, to see the *heavenly* Sabbath sooner than they think! Fear not to go down into the Egypt of the grave, for the Lord will go down with you into the sepulcher. Jesus has been there—Fear not to go where He went. Whenever I am called in to see any of our dying church members, I find them, without exception, calm and willing to depart. When I come out of the dying chamber, I invariably feel that my faith has been greatly strengthened. The way in which they meet the approach of the great enemy, calmly and triumphantly, makes me rest joyfully confident in the gospel which I preach. Our dear friends sing, and even shout joyously in death. One brother, who passed away not long ago, even made me laugh by the joyous things he told me in his own quaint way. I could not help laughing for joy when he talked about heaven as if he had been there! There is a dear brother, not many doors from this spot, who will probably soon pass away; but he speaks about his departure as calmly as if he were only going to the seaside for a holiday. Our Lord's love has changed the very aspect of death's face. My dear brother and co-pastor said to me one day, "O brother, our people die well, do they not?" That they do; they give us proof of the truth of God which we preach by the way in which it sustains them in their last hours. Without the slightest fear, or perturbation of mind, they march onward to the Jordan singing with the stream in view. I know no happier people in my acquaintance, than a certain suffering few, who are within measurable distance of the celestial city. And so it ought to be.

But what is to become of you who have no faith? What is to become of you who have no God to go to? O soul, if you have no God, you are, indeed, miserable! God bring you at once to Himself, through Jesus Christ His Son! Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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