

“THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID”

NO. 2366

A SERMON
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“And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”
Acts 13:34

WE know from this quotation made by the apostle Paul in his address at Antioch, that he was alluding not only to David, but to the Lord Jesus also. “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.”

There was a covenant made with David which was intended to be typical of another covenant, and David himself is the special type of that great King with whom God has made a covenant on behalf of His people. We will leave David somewhat in the background in our meditations tonight, we will only use him as the symbol of the great Christ in whom we rejoice, for God gives to us “the sure mercies of David” in Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son.

The course of our thought upon this passage, if we are helped to follow it, will be this. First let us consider, *Where our salvation lies*, it lies in this, that the mercies we receive are “the sure mercies of David.” When we have turned that thought over, we will try to answer this question, *What are the sure mercies of David?* Our next inquiry will be, *In what day are they so sure?* And then lastly, we will inquire, *What is the connection between the sure mercies of David and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?* This text is evidently quoted to prove that the resurrection of Christ was spoken of in the Old Testament, “As concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.”

I. First, dear friends, let us consider, WHERE OUR SALVATION LIES.

It does not lie in ourselves. You may sift yourself over and over, as with a sieve, and you will not discover one atom of saving matter in yourself. You may throw on the dunghill all that you find there. There is not a grain of grace in a hundred tons of human nature. You may go on sifting, sifting, sifting, to all eternity, and you shall find only that which is worthy of the damning sentence. Ask any man who is saved, and if he speaks intelligently, he will tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ is his salvation. If he begins to explain the grounds, reasons and foundation of his salvation, he will look away from himself and will point to Jesus Christ alone.

The text speaks about David, and David is a good type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom our salvation lies. Jesus was *one who was despised and rejected*, just as David was in his own family. When Samuel came to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse, David was away watching the sheep, and he was not thought worthy of being called in till Samuel specially sent for him. His brothers evidently despised him, and condemned him as being forward when really he was more courageous than they were.

So, our Lord was despised and rejected of men, they did not think that the Nazarene could be the Messiah. It was enough merely to mention His name, and to speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, for them at once to ridicule His claims. They judged that it was not possible that He, who was so poor, so meek, so lowly, that He who had so little of anything which they looked for in the promised Deliverer, should be the Savior, yet He was and still is the only Savior.

You know the story or tradition, that when they were building Solomon’s temple, all the stones were marked to indicate the places where they should go, for no hammer or chisel was to be used upon them in the sacred courts. There was one stone of a very awkward shape, and the builders could not find a place for it, they turned it over and tried to fit it in here and there, but it would not go in anywhere, so they threw it aside, and the nettles and the thistles grew over it, and it became a proverb and a by-word. One would say to another, “Will you not try to build in that stone?” but they all in turn gave it up, it was the stone which the builders refused.

At last the temple was all but finished, it only lacked one cornerstone, and they looked about for it, but they could not find it. Someone at last suggested, “Perhaps that queerly shaped stone is the very one intended to complete the temple,” and they brought it out, and found that it was even so.

Our blessed Lord and Master applied to Himself the words of the psalmist, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Like David, Jesus was the rejected one, but He is the Anointed of the Lord, blessed be His holy name!

Our salvation lies in another, even in *one who has fought our greatest enemy, and overthrown him*. This was the mark of David, that in due time, he came to the front when all Israel fled from the gigantic Philistine. The two champions meet for the deadly duel, the stone flies from the shepherd’s sling, the giant falls, his head is cut off with his own sword, and David brings the gory trophy to King Saul.

Our salvation lies in one who has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. I see Him coming back with the tokens of His triumph in His hand, like David, He has slain His ten thousands in slaying the one great enemy of His people. In this Jesus, who died on Calvary, and in dying destroyed death, and burst the bonds of the grave, lies our salvation.

Yet it lies in *one who, despite His glorious triumphs, was sorely persecuted*. David did not go straightway from his victory over the Philistine to sit upon his throne, but he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains, and long had to carry his life in his hands. He had to pass through sore persecution ere he became king. And beloved, in a certain sense, that is the condition of our Lord Jesus Christ even now, He is still rejected.

I know that His name is used, and men like to call themselves His followers, but if you set forth a real Christ, crucified among them, and preach His great substitutionary sacrifice, you shall see that He is no more a favorite among men than He used to be. Still will they spit in His face, still will they scourge Him, still will they crucify Him. There has been a long, long battle, through these nearly two thousand years, while men have cried concerning the Lord and His Anointed, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

But the King will yet come to His throne. God says concerning Him, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” “I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers....Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” But for a while, the prince of this world prevails, the Saul, the enemy that walks in darkness, is allowed to “worry whom he can’t devour,” and though it shall not be always so, yet at present it is a time of conflict and trial.

Our salvation rests still in a despised Gospel, in a hunted Christ, but as Israel looked to David in Engedi, by the tracks of the wild goats, and not to Saul upon the throne, so we look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Though He is still cast out and persecuted, He is the one hope of our spirits.

Bear with me while I also say that our salvation lies in *one who was thrice anointed*, even as David was, first at his father’s house, then at Hebron, where he was anointed king of Judah, and afterwards when he came fully to his throne, and was acknowledged as king of all Israel. Our Jesus was trebly anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King. God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness, and we today rejoice in Him as fully fitted, prepared, and equipped for completing the great work of our salvation.

Once more, beloved, as David ultimately came to his throne, and when on his throne was seen as the king with whom God had entered into a solemn covenant that the throne should be his forever, even so our salvation lies in *one with whom God has made a covenant “ordered in all things and sure,”* a

covenant which shall stand fast when earth’s old pillars bow, and when all things that are created shall melt into their natural nothingness.

You know that we fell in one federal head, even the first Adam. Behold the glory of the fact that we rise in another Representative, even the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We see our ruin yonder in the garden of Eden, we see our salvation yonder in another garden, Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary.

Still do we look beyond all our willings, and doings, and prayings and everything that comes of ourselves, to the Son of God and Son of man, given by God to accomplish that redemption by which sinners are saved! The Lord says concerning Jesus, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.” This Almighty Savior is the only hope of guilty men.

May I ask my dear hearers at once—lest I should suddenly have to stop short in my sermon—do you know and trust this Savior? Have you come to lean on Christ alone? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you say, “He is all my salvation, and all my desire”? Can you take Him up in your arms, as old Simeon did, and bless God that your eyes have seen His salvation?

All that can save you lies there, in the person and work of this glorious David, of whom I desire to speak to you tonight. May God the Holy Spirit introduce you to Him if you know Him not, and may you accept Him at once, as God would have you accept Him, as your Savior and your all!

I have thus spoken upon the first point, where our salvation lies.

II. Now secondly, WHAT ARE THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID? What is meant by that expression?

I have already told you, but I may tell you yet again. God dealt with Israel by way of mercy, and to make that mercy sure He took a man whom He had chosen, a man whom He loved, a man whom He intended to use, and He made with him a covenant that He would set him upon the throne, that by his personal influence he might bring down blessings upon all the people. These are “the sure mercies of David.”

In the matter of our salvation, “the sure mercies of David” mean that *God has laid help upon His Son, Jesus Christ*. You cannot help yourself, but Christ can help you; you cannot cleanse yourself, but Christ can cleanse you; you cannot save yourself, but Christ can save you. Dear heart, whatever be your lack, there is no lack in Christ, whatever be your need, Christ has exactly that which can meet your case.

Young man, you say, “I have nothing,” and I meet you with this, Christ has everything. You say, old man, “What can I do?” “And I meet you with this, What cannot Christ do? If you are nothing, Christ is everything. If you are everything that is evil, Christ is everything that is good. If you have weakness, mourn it, but trust Christ, and He shall be your strength. If you have sorrow, you can not shake it off, but go to Jesus, and He shall be your song. All that you want is in Christ. This then, is the first sure mercy of David, that help is laid on Christ.

And next, as David was anointed to be the Leader and Commander to his people, even so, *Christ is anointed on our behalf*. He comes not to us as a self-sent Savior, but as one anointed of God. It was a great comfort to me, when I put myself in Christ’s hands, that I had not to pick out a Savior for myself, but God had appointed Him. I did not put myself into the hands of one who was not authorized to act, for Jesus comes to us fully commissioned by God.

A person who has no diploma may very possibly be a wise surgeon, but there are few sufferers who would trust themselves in difficult operations with a man who was not properly authorized to act in such a case. My Lord has a full diploma given Him by the infinite wisdom of God. He knows how to save. He has been long in practice, and there are multitudes in heaven whom He has saved. He is the great specialist in soul saving, and He can meet your special case. He has dealt with diseases that no one else can understand, and if you are an odd man, or the oddest of the odd, yet this Christ, all comprehensive in His wondrous wisdom, knows all about your condition.

This is another of the sure mercies of David, first, help is laid on Christ, and next, He is anointed to act on our behalf.

We are told, in the eighty-ninth psalm, that God promised David that He would overthrow all his enemies, “I will beat down his foes before his face.” Here then is another sure mercy for us, *Christ will rout all our enemies*. Who are they? How many are there of them? Which way do they come to assault us? Christ can meet them all. Your sins, your many fierce and cruel sins, are your enemies, but Christ has made full atonement for them all.

Believe you, and these Egyptians shall sink like lead in the Red Sea of your Savior’s blood. Your present lusts, your evil passions, the instincts of your nature which you cannot curb are foes too strong for you to overcome, but Christ is able to destroy them, and to put all your temptations to the rout.

It may be that Satan himself assails you, and I pity you if that be the case. Any man who has had a real encounter with the devil will never forget it. All the tempters in hell together cannot make up so dreadful an adversary as Apollyon himself, but even he knows who is his Master.

Christ can bid him lie down and be still, as a man silences a dog. Only look you to Christ, for this is part of the covenant, ordered in all things and sure, that He shall rout your adversaries. Hand your enemies over to Him, and He will rid you of them. Cry, “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me,” and you shall have a gracious answer, and quick deliverance.

God also made this to be a part of His covenant with His servant David, that he was to be a storehouse of good things to the nation over which he reigned, and *Jesus is the storehouse of mercy to all His people*. I am so glad that I have to speak to those who want large supplies of grace, for there is in Christ all that any sinner can ever need. As truly can it be said now as it might have been said nearly nineteen hundred years ago—

*“Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood,
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Is saved to sin no more.”*

He that opened eyes long ago, can open your eyes, He that healed lepers in Judea can heal you, He that raised the dead, can raise you. He is as much a Savior now as He was at the first, if there be any difference, He has an increase of power, for now has God committed into the hand of Jesus all power in heaven and in earth. Only come and trust Him, for all your salvation lies in Him, and in Him will be found for you in abundance all “the sure mercies of David.”

There is this point also about the covenant made with David, that he was always to have a seed, and *Jesus will always have a seed*. I never come to preach at haphazard, saying to myself, “Perhaps my Lord will have some souls bow before Him.” I know that I have a large congregation, and I feel sure that, when God’s truth is proclaimed, some will yield to Christ, when He speaks, some of His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him, and He will give unto them eternal life. When the good seed of the kingdom is sown, there are some furrows in which it will surely take root, and bring forth a harvest to His praise.

Well then, since Christ must have a seed, why should not I be amongst them? Since, as a Savior, He must save some, why should He not save me? If He is a Physician, and must heal some, why should He not heal me? If He spreads a banquet of mercy, and the wedding must be furnished with guests, why should not I have a seat among them? How I pray that I may be putting a hopeful thought into some troubled heart tonight!

I would get alongside some trembler and whisper this into his ear, “Jesus must save sinners, will not you be one of those whom He must save?” It is written, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” If you trust Him, and He does not save you, let us know of it, for we shall have to alter our preaching, Christ will have run back from His word, He will be another Savior, and not the one in whom we trusted.

Come then, and learn what “the sure mercies of David” are. They are the sure mercies of Jesus, that in Him there is salvation, He is anointed on purpose to give salvation, He is able to rout your

adversaries, yea, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

III. That leads me to say a few words, as best I may, upon the third point, IN WHAT WAY MAY THESE MERCIES BE SAID TO BE SURE?

Well, they may be said to be sure *because they are found in Jesus*. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, then whatever is in Him, is most surely sure. What a storehouse for God to lay up His mercy in, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! Remember how the Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh, but beloved, the Lord God has made His treasure city to be His own dear Son. “It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” “Go unto Joseph,” said Pharaoh. “Go unto Jesus,” saith JEHOVAH, for all the blessings of the covenant are treasured up in Him, and are therefore safe and sure.

If salvation had been in your own keeping, you would have lost it long ago. If your hope had lain in yourself, it would soon have been withered up, but since it lies in Jesus, and in Jesus only, it is always living and blessed. You and I, poor, helpless, hopeless souls, can flee to this city of refuge, whose gates are never closed, and find ourselves secure from the adversary. They are “the sure mercies of David” because the mercies are all in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The expression is also a good one *because the mercies that come to us by Christ are real mercies*. It seems a very commonplace question to ask, but it is needful to ask it, did you ever feel yourself to be a real sinner? It is wonderfully easy to go on crying, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” and yet to know nothing at all about genuine conviction of sin.

You know that beggars make sham wounds. I do not know the process, but I have been told that they have certain acids which they can put on their flesh, and make you believe they have terrible wounds. But real wounds are very different from sham ones, and when a man is a real sinner and knows it, and his sin cuts into his heart, then he wants real pardoning, real cleansing, and a real Savior. So I tell you of “the sure mercies of David,” real forgiveness for real guilt, real pardon for real rebellion, nothing sham or superficial.

Yes, you truly guilty ones, you who might be ashamed to be sitting in the house of God tonight, you who might well cover your faces at being found where godly people come together, you are the sort of people for whom Jesus died. You who need to be disinfected and set apart, you are the sort that our great Lord came into the world to seek and to save. Blessed be His name, He brings us “the sure mercies of David.”

I think the expression is used again, *because the blessings needed are surely provided*. I have said that you need pardon and cleansing.

***“There is a fountain fill’d with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”***

There is cleansing in that fountain for you. The blessings which your souls need will not have to be created, they are ready, they are waiting. The medicine for your sickness is already compounded, the clothing for your nakedness is already made, all that you want between here and heaven is stored up in the provision of God’s mercy that is made in Christ Jesus. You will never surprise the Lord by the greatness of your necessities, nor have to hear Him say, “I cannot meet your special case.” No, there is a sure provision made already for every soul that will come to God by Jesus Christ.

The blessings of the covenant of grace are sure mercies *because they are surely bestowed*. You shall not merely hear of them, but you shall receive them. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins, which are many, shall be all forgiven, if you will look alone to Christ, you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

Do you hear this, you despairing one? In the name of God I say it to you, if I never have an opportunity of uttering it in your hearing again. Will you come and cast your soul on the great David, Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved of the Father? If you do, you shall have power to become a child of God, and then all the heritage which belongs to the heirs of heaven shall fall to your lot, surely it shall be so, you will have those “sure mercies of David.”

And once you have them, you shall never lose them, *because they shall surely be continued*. If God shall bestow on you eternal life, it shall be eternal life. If God shall once forgive you, He will not afterwards condemn you. If the Judge of all shall justify you, who shall lay anything to your charge? If the Good Shepherd shall bring you into His fold, who shall pluck you from His hand?

He says of His sheep, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” I have not to preach to you a Gospel of “ifs” and “buts” and “peradventures,” but a Gospel of “shalls” and “wills.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Jesus said, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

God does not speak to sinful men in the way of mere hopefulfulness, but He speaks with an absolute certainty of grace. If you believe, you shall be as surely saved as God is God. Though you are the most guilty soul out of hell, if you will fly to Christ Jesus, you shall as surely be in heaven as God is in heaven. Only trust in Jesus. “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.”

Riches of mercy, floods of grace, ceaseless outflowings of love, shall be yours if you will but put yourself under Christ’s leadership, if you will take Him as your Leader and Commander, and as the one Mediator between God and men.

IV. Now lastly, IN WHAT WAY ARE “THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID” CONNECTED WITH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

God promised to David that his seed should always sit upon his throne, but if Jesus dies, then is that Covenant broken. *That Jesus’ reign may endure forever, He must live*. Though He bows His head in death, yet must He live, He must rise again, else the King is gone, the throne is vacant, the covenant has failed. Jesus must rise from the dead, else how can He save His people? Can a dead Christ save us?

The Church of Rome continually sets before us Christ either as a baby in His mother’s arms, or else as a man dead on the cross. Neither of these is a true portrait of Christ.

He is no more a babe, and He is no more dead, He sits on the throne, reigning and ruling, and He will come, the second time, without sin, unto salvation. The living Christ is our hope. It is witnessed of Him that He liveth at the right hand of God, and as I quoted to you just now, it is for this reason that “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Finally, *the resurrection of Christ guarantees to all His people “the sure mercies of David.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ has passed through great changes, yet He has always remained the same. He was once God in the full glory of illimitable splendor, then a babe upon a woman’s lap, then a carpenter’s son working and toiling in a quiet village, then a teacher and preacher and miracle-worker, then a sufferer with His visage more marred than any of the sons of men, then bound, accused, scourged, condemned, crucified, dead, and buried. A wonderful change this, is it not—from pure Godhead to the grave?

Then He rose again, and rising, He revealed Himself in His glory to His disciples, meeting with them by the sea, and in divers places, until at last He ascended, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and now He sits, in supernal majesty, at the right hand of the Father, waiting till He shall come to judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with His truth.

I do not know how to finish up my sermon better than by telling you the old story of Robbie Flockhart, which I have told in this house before, but not to this present congregation. The story shows the blessedness of Christ’s death and resurrection. Robbie Flockhart used constantly to preach in the streets of Edinburgh, and he told this story.

He said, “I had a friend in the army, and he committed some offense in wartime for which he was condemned to be shot. So he said, ‘Robbie, I have to die tomorrow, and as I have a little money, I have made my will and left it to you.’ ‘Thank you,’ I said. The next morning, instead of being taken out to be shot, the soldier received a free pardon, so,” said Robbie, “He got his life, and I lost my legacy, for a testament is not of force while the testator lives, he must die to give effect to his will. And,” said Robbie, “our great Testator is dead, we know that He died, they nailed Him to the cross, therefore His will stands good, let us go and take the legacy He has bequeathed to us. But,” added Robbie, “that story is not enough to set forth Christ’s work for us.

Some time after, another friend left me a legacy and he did die.” There were some lawyers who got hold of the money, and Robbie never received a penny of the legacy. He said, “if my friend had been alive, I would have got it, that is to say, if he could have died and then afterwards have been alive again, he would have seen that I received the legacy.

So, the first time I lost my legacy because the friend who left it to me did not die, and the second time I lost it because the friend who left it to me did die, but did not rise again. But,” said he, “see the glorious safety of the believer’s legacy from His Lord. He who died, and so made the will of effect, has risen again, and He will see that no lawyer, honest or dishonest, shall ever interfere with the legacies that He left to His people. Not even the devil himself shall prevent the heirs of everlasting life from obtaining the heritage which Christ has left them in the new covenant which He has sealed with His blood.”

Beloved, the mercies of David are sure because your David lives, He died to purchase these mercies for you, He lives to claim them on your behalf. He died to cleanse you, He lives to apply that cleansing to you, and to see that the work is fully done. Come to God in the name of Him that is living, and was dead, I entreat you to come to Him.

How happy should I be if all in this congregation came to Christ! You who have come, and I suppose that is the majority here tonight, come again, looking unto Jesus, and you who have never come before, oh, that this Thursday night might be made memorable by your coming to Him who ever lives to save the sons of men!

Dreams of happiness and thoughts of joy, hit across my mind as I stand here, and think that perhaps—nay, great Lord, I drop the “perhaps,” for it will be so—you will yield yourselves to Jesus tonight, He will give you “the sure mercies of David,” He will enter into covenant with you, and then each one of you will say—

*“Now will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found;
I’ll point to Thy redeeming blood,
And say, ‘Behold the way to God.’”*

As I remember the day when I first saw Christ on the cross, and trusting in Him, soon began to tell the story to others, and many thousands have come to Jesus by the simple telling of the old, old story, so I feel tonight as if some young man here will come and trust in Jesus, and will go and say to others, “Look and live.” It may be that some mother here, finding Christ herself, will be a blessing to her children, and that some father, believing unto life eternal, will bring his sons and daughters to the Savior’s feet, and if so, I will be forever happy, and the Lord’s name shall be praised and magnified for ever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

Acts 13:13-49

Verses 13-14. *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.*

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down.

They would be noticed as strangers who had come thither. The synagogue did not generally contain a very large assembly, and the Jews of the place would be well known to one another, and they would notice that two or three men had come in whom they had not been accustomed to see in their company.

15-17. *And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.*

They always liked to hear the story of their race, it was sure to win their attention. Notice how expressly Paul puts it, that though they were a favored people, it was by the election of divine grace that they were such, “The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers.” The Lord chooseth whom He will, and He chose the fathers of the house of Israel, “and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt.” God took care of them when they were aliens and foreigners under a cruel power in the land of Egypt, “and with an high arm brought he them out of it.”

This was the glory of Israel, the Jews always delighted to hear of Egypt, of the Exodus, and of the great things that God did for them in the day of their redemption when, by the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, they were protected from the sword of the destroying angel.

18. *And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.*

It is a continuous history that Paul gives to these people at Antioch, and it brings to their minds the sins of their fathers as well as the grace of their God. These are two things that you and I need always to keep in mind, God’s grace and our own sin. Truly, I fear that God has had much provocation from us during our forty years, even as He had with His ancient people. There is much meaning packed away in that sentence, “Forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.”

19. *And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.*

The Lord did not run back from His covenant. He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, and He gave it to them, even though seven nations had to be destroyed to make room for them. This verse reminds us of that passage in Isaiah, “since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.” He gave seven nations of Canaan for this one nation of Israel.

20-21. *And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king:*

This was another piece of wantonness on the Israelites’ part. God was their King, yet they must have a visible king like the other nations by which they were surrounded. They were faithfully warned by the prophet Samuel of the evil consequences that would follow their choice, but they would not be content with their God as their only Ruler, “afterward they desired a king.”

21-23. *And God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:*

No matter where the apostle begins, he comes to Jesus Christ before long. No matter what the preacher’s text may be, he must never close a sermon without having set forth the claims of Jesus. This should be the invariable rule of our ministry, that Christ is the top and bottom, the sum and substance of all our preaching. Paul could truly say, “We preach Christ crucified.”

24-26. *When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.*

This is plain preaching, pointed preaching, bold preaching. Paul did not conceal the truth, though he well knew how objectionable it would be to his hearers, yet he put it before them in the plainest possible terms, “To you is the word of this salvation sent.”

27. *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.*

It was strange that they should fulfill the prophecies which they had often read, no doubt, with fear and trembling. They became the guilty agents by which the prophecies were fulfilled. Paul’s preaching agrees with what Peter said on the day of Pentecost, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

28-30. *And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead:*

Now the apostle has reached the very heart of his subject, now he has come to the great cornerstone of the Christian faith. Notice that there are no embellishments here, there is not even an anecdote, or a story by which he may illustrate the truth he sets forth, but just a plain declaration of the great facts of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are the backbone of the Gospel, and the more we dwell upon these facts, the better. Let us preach the doctrines that grow out of these facts, for the facts are stubborn things, and if they be backed by the Spirit of God, they will carry all before them.

31-33. *And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

Writing to the Hebrews, Paul quotes this passage from the psalms to prove Christ’s Godhead and everlasting filiation, so that he evidently saw more than one meaning in this portion of divine teaching, and we do not err when we believe that no Scripture is exhausted by a single explanation. The flowers of God’s garden bloom not only double, but sevenfold, they are continually pouring forth fresh fragrance.

34-35. *And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

Christ did die, but His precious body was not allowed to see corruption.

36-41. *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.*

This is a noble sermon, but again I remark, how simple it is! Like the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, it is free from that continual calling out of “Believe, believe, believe,” which is the habit of some preachers who never tell the people what they have to believe. Exhortation is well enough in its place, but you must not have all powder in your gun, there must be some shot also.

The apostle has solid facts here which he drives home to the heart and conscience of his hearers, he does not forget that the weight and force of a sermon must lie in the distinct truth which is taught in it.

42. *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.*

They would like to hear the same message, so they said to Paul, “This sermon was to the Jews. Will you not preach to us Gentiles? We have come in here and heard what you have said, but you did not speak specially to us, will you do so next Sabbath?”

43-44. *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.*

And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

There is something attractive about the Gospel. I do not think they sent out a trumpeter, the preaching of the Gospel is all the trumpet that is needed to gather the people together. If we will but preach it in the power and plenitude of the Spirit of God, it will soon attract a congregation, as it did in this instance.

45-49. *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

God send us days like that, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—231, 227, 244

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