

FEARING AND HOPING NO. 2524

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 4, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1885.

*“The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”
Psalm 147:11.*

This Psalm, I think, was intended to set forth the singularity of God. In it we are exhorted to praise Him who is our God, and to give honor and glory to Him alone. The psalmist does not dwell, here, upon those attributes which usually call forth our praise, or the praises of men in general, but he touches some special strings of the harp from which he brings forth joyous music for the children of Zion, that they may be glad in their King. This is one of the notes of the Psalm—that although God, Himself is so high, He has a very tender regard toward those who are lowly. He turns His thoughts, not to those who are brilliant and attractive, but to those who are broken in heart, and wounded in spirit! While the gods of the heathen are pictured in their mythologies as dealing with kingdoms, and with wars, and with other matters upon a large scale, this gracious God of ours is so infinitely condescending that He waters the grass, feeds the cattle, and listens to the cries of young ravens! This is, indeed, a specialty with God, and one which unconverted men do not readily discover, or even think much about when it is spoken of in their hearing. But you who know Him, you who love Him, delight in these wondrous condescension of His grace—His dealing in mercy with the contrite and broken in spirit, His filling heaven, and yet filling you, His ruling the stars, and yet managing your mean affairs—His fiat that creates a , and His gentle promises suited to the understanding of a child, to the healing of a widow's sorrow, and the loosening of the bonds of the prisoner! Oh, yes, we feel that we are bound to our God with cords of a man, and with bands of love! He considers us when we are of low estate, therefore we will give all diligence to acquaint ourselves with Him, so that we may be at peace.

Having spoken of the singularity of God, the psalmist dwells, in the verse before us, upon the specialty of His favor. Great kings are known to have their favorite objects in which they delight with peculiar pleasure. Many monarchs have gloried in “the strength of a horse.” Their squadrons of cavalry have been their confidence. Others have taken more delight in “the legs of a man.” The muscles and sinews of their soldiers have been their boast. You must have noticed, in the Assyrian sculptures, the importance that was attached by the workmen, and by the monarch, also, to “the legs of a man.” They represent the warriors as brawny and strong, swift in running, and firm in holding their place in the day of battle. But our God takes no delight in cavalry or infantry! No armies of horse or foot soldiers give Him any gladness—the Lord takes pleasure in very different persons from these. His delight, His joy, His solace—if we may use such a word—are found in other company than that which is martial. He turns His eyes quite another way. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

I. First of all, dear friends, let us think of THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS HERE DISTINGUISHED.

They are distinguished, first, from *physical strength*. I have already told you what is meant by the psalmist in the previous verse, “He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.” When a man was to be chosen to be king over Israel, the Lord, who knew the weakness of the people, gave to them one who was head and shoulders above the rest of them. It is natural to men to have regard to the comeliness of the person, and the stature and apparent strength of the individual who is to rule over them. And, oftentimes men and women are so foolish as to imagine that there is something about the beauty of their face, or the excellence of their person that should not only make their fellow creatures admire them, but should make their God admire them, too! True, there are old proverbs which bid us think lightly of the kind of beauty which is but skin deep, and that tell us that

“handsome is that handsome does.” But still, there is the temptation in a man who finds himself healthy, vigorous, and strong—the personification of power—to fancy that, as he has a measure of influence over his fellows, he may have favor with God. But, ah, that would be indeed a vain and idle dream! Let no man thus delude himself. You, good sir, with all your beauty, and your strength, may be but a day’s march from the grave! Then will you be *food for worms*, like the rest of those who have gone before you! “Beauty is vain.” What is man, “whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” God thinks nothing of you in that matter of your personal strength and beauty, however greatly you may pride yourself thereon! Physical force is found in a greater degree in a horse than in a man—and if there were to be some honor given to man because of his physical strength, it ought to be given still more to the rhinoceros, or to the elephant, or to the whale! Therefore, dear friends, you can clearly see how absurd it would be for a man to value himself upon his bodily comeliness or strength!

There are not many, I should think, who would fall into that gross absurdity, but there are some who seem to think that *mental vigor* will surely be respected of God. The man who is the deepest thinker, who can look into the very heart of a subject, who can see farthest into a millstone—surely *he* shall have some commendation from God! And there is a kind of superstition current that if a man has been very clever, if he has written some very entertaining books, it must be all right with him! Straightway, he who in his life sneered at saintship, is enrolled among the saints! And for anyone to question the character of such a person, even though it may be well known that it was utterly deficient in every kind of virtue before God, is almost regarded as *treason against the majesty of literature!* Well, such a delusion may rule the shallow minds that yield to it, but rest you assured that cleverness, ability, culture, and learning, in and of themselves, have no influence with the Most High! He delights in the lowliest of men, when they turn to Him, when they sit at Jesus’ feet, and learn His Words. But the greatest conceivable ability, if it is united with forgetfulness of God, will ensure to its possessor a more terrible punishment from the right hand of God than would have fallen upon the man had he been ignorant and without gifts, “for unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required.” It is a good thing to be learned and wise, and the more you can cultivate your minds, the better, but remember the words of the apostle—“Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” And, oftentimes, the wisdom which is merely that of the mind may even prove like scales upon the spiritual eyes, hiding from the soul the blessed sight which alone can save it! It is true mentally as well as physically, that the Lord takes no pleasure in any of the faculties which a man possesses if he is destitute of grace.

Another thing in which the Lord takes no pleasure is that *self-reliance* which is much cried up nowadays. This is only another form of “the strength of the horse” and “the legs of a man.” Some persons proudly say that they are self-made men—and I generally find that they worship their makers. Having made themselves, they are peculiarly devoted to themselves. But a man who is self-made is badly made! If God does not make him anew, it would have been better for him never to have been made! That which comes of man is but a polluted stream from an impure source—out of evil comes evil, and from a depraved nature comes depravity. It is only when God makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus that it is any joy for us to be creatures at all! And all the praise must be given to Him. “It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves,” if this day, “we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” Therefore, although you should exercise every faculty that you possess, and push with might and main in the battle of life, do not rely on yourself! It is foolish to worship a god of wood, or of stone. It is equally foolish to worship a god of flesh. And it is *most* foolish when that god of flesh is yourself! Worship the Lord, trust in God—“Trust in Him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before Him.” “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” The Lord takes not pleasure in the boastful self-dependence wherein some glory.

Nor, dear friends, do I think that God takes pleasure in any mere *capacity for service* which exists in any of us, whoever we may be. “The strength of the horse,” and “the legs of a man” do but set forth what I now intend to speak of. Suppose a man is a child of God, and a preacher of the Word—and that he possesses peculiar gifts to set forth the truth—let him not, therefore, exalt himself, for in mere capacity, even though it is the capacity to preach the gospel, God takes no pleasure! A preacher has a talent which brings with it great responsibility—it will not be a blessing bringing a reward unless grace is giv-

en to him to use it to his Lord's glory! Are you, dear friend, peculiarly adapted for teaching in the Sunday school, and has God put honor upon you there? Then remember that what your Master will look to will not be your ability, but your *fidelity*—not your capacious mind, your firm grasp of the truth, and your power to impart it to others—but the grace with which you use this faculty and this ability! I believe that there may be many a godly woman who teaches her handful of infants to do little more than read, and who is scarcely able to convey a profound idea to their minds, who, nevertheless, may be a greater blessing than that teacher who has gathered many about him, whom he has been able to instruct with marked ability, but without corresponding grace. I am sure that it would have been better for some of us who have to come before thousands of hearers with our message, and yet we are not faithful to your souls—if we had occupied the lowliest pulpit, and preached to only 10 or 20 people, or if we had never spoken at all! For God values none of us by our position, or our ability, or even by our apparent success! He does not take pleasure in all this of itself—it is in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy—in our spiritual relationship to Himself, and our spiritual dealings with Himself, that He does have a keen delight. All the rest may or may not be delightful to Him. He may or may not look upon it with complacency—that will entirely depend upon whether we are those who fear Him, and who hope in His mercy!

II. Now, in the second place, I want your earnest attention while I notice THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. “Them that fear Him: those that hope in His mercy.”

You see, dear friends, these are *things which relate to God*. God's favor is displayed to those who fear Him, and who hope in His mercy. You are truly, dear friend, what you are towards God, and God regards you according to what you are in reference to Himself. If you are a philanthropist, a lover of mankind—that is well as far as it goes, but it is always evil to put the second table of the commandments before the first. The first is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” And then the second table bids you, “love your neighbor as yourself.” But he who does not love his God has not learned aright how to love his neighbor! There is a worm at the core of philanthropy when it is not accompanied with true religion. Depend upon it, that what you are toward your God, that you *really are*, and so does He regard you. What if you fear *evil*? Yet if you fear not *Him*, you are not really His! And what if you have hope this way or that? Yet you are not right before Him unless you have hope in His mercy! You have not come to your right condition unless your emotions, joyous or sorrowful, have relation to Him.

Notice, next, that this description of character applies to *true servants of God in their earliest and weakest form*. Observe, it is not said, here, that God has pleasure in those who possess full assurance, though that is most true, but He has pleasure in “them that fear Him”—who can get no further in the spiritual life than to fear the Lord, and who, as yet, even have something of the spirit of bondage connected with that fear! Yet, if there is also in them a little of that brightness which comes of hoping in His mercy, the Lord takes pleasure even in such poor feeble creatures! They have not yet attained to full confidence in God's mercy—they are only hoping in it at present—yet, if it is a real fear of Him, and a true hope in His mercy, however little it may be, the Lord takes pleasure in them! You do not take much pleasure in yourself, poor hoping-fearing one, do you? That may be, and it may be quite consistent with God's taking pleasure in you! There are some who take pleasure in themselves, but in whom God has no pleasure—and there are many who loathe themselves in their own sight, who, nevertheless, are delightful in the sight of the Most High! Our judgment of ourselves is a very different thing from God's judgment of us! Dear heart, do you fear to come before God because of your sin? Do you tremblingly stretch out your finger to touch the hem of your Savior's garment, so that you may be made whole? Is your faith feeble? Do you trust His Word, but weakly? He will not, therefore, spurn you, but will receive you, for, as He healed the woman who came behind Him in the crowd, and bade her go in peace, so will He do with you! “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.” If they never get beyond that point for the present, they shall get into a higher stage, by-and-by, but even now the Lord takes pleasure in them! “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” The description in our text is intended to embrace the *weakest forms of spiritual life*. I am sure it is, because of the kind of grammatical structure between our text and the verse that precedes it—“He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.” That is, He has no pleasure in the strong things, the powerful, the vigorous, but He has pleasure in the weak, though true—in the trembling, though sincere. He takes pleasure in those who are so little that all we can say of them is that they fear Him, and that they hope in His mercy!

Yet I also think that this description comprises *the noblest form of religion in the very highest degree of it*. After all, we do not get beyond this point—fearing God and hoping in His mercy! A little child grows, but when it has grown to manhood, it is the same being as when it was a child. It has not grown another eye, or another hand, or another foot—all that is in it when it is a man, was in it when it was a child! In like manner, all the graces of our holy religion are in the new-born babe in grace—not perceptibly as yet, nor called into action, but they are all there—and when the babe in grace shall reach the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, there will be in him just what there was in him when he was a little and weak child. Therefore, let us grow as we may, we shall always fear God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, but not that *filial fear* which is here meant, that child-like reverence, and holy awe of the Most High that shall grow, and shall deepen, world without end. And as to hope, beloved, why, we had hope when we began our spiritual life, and we still have hope—and that hope will continue with us—I will not say in heaven, though I think it will, for there is something to hope for in the disembodied state. We shall hope for the day of resurrection, and there will be something to hope for even in the resurrection, for, throughout the ages we shall have a good hope that still we shall be “forever with the Lord.” Certainly, he who knows God best, fears Him most, and also hopes in Him most! Fear deepens, and hope rises, and I believe that very much in proportion as a man has the fear of God before his eyes, he will have a hope in God within his heart. And as he learns to hope in God, and to hope nowhere else, his fear of God will become more and more operative upon his entire nature and life.

I should like you also to notice that the persons favored of God are represented *as a sort of sacred blending of different characters*. “Them that fear Him”—“those that hope in His mercy.” These two things, fear of God, and hope in His mercy, go well together, and what God has joined, let no man put asunder! Blessed is that man who has a trembling fear concerning his sinnership, who knows that he deserves the deepest hell, bows before God under the burden of sin, and always loathes himself to think that he should have been such a sinner—but who also hopes in God’s mercy! He is sure of sin, but equally sure of sin’s forgiveness! He is humbled by guilt, but equally rejoicing in the fullness of that atonement which has covered his transgression, and cast his iniquity into the depths of the sea! *I fear* because I am such a great sinner. *I hope* because Christ is such a great Savior! I am down in the very depths whenever I think of my guilt, crying out unto God, but I am also up in the very heights as I think of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and am led, thereby, to hope in the mercy of God! It is a beautiful blend, that fear of God, and hope in His mercy!

It is well every day to have this sacred blending in another fashion, to be always afraid of yourself, fearful to begin the day without praying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” never indulging in self-confidence in the least, yet always hoping in the mercy of God that He will keep you, and never allow you to perish, for He has said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” This is a blessed blending of fear and hope, fearing before God, knowing what a frail and feeble creature you are, and yet confident in the Lord, knowing how mighty, how faithful, and how unchangeable He is to keep the souls that are committed to His care!

Then there is that holy form of fear which causes a jealous anxiety concerning yourself. I do not wish to ever be rid of that kind of fear.

There is a doubting of yourself which it is well to cultivate until honest and faithful self-examination has enabled you, in all impartiality, to conclude that you are the child of God. But, oh, never let that fear degenerate into a looking to frames and feelings as your ground of confidence! Let your hope always be in God’s mercy, whatever may be the result of your self-examination. These two things should always go together—“Lord, search me, and try me, and know my ways.” “Yet, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You, and that my hope is fixed upon You, and I do not doubt that You are able to keep that which I have committed to You.” There, you see, is the fear of the Lord, but there is also hope in His mercy; and these two streams run side by side in the life of the man in whom God takes pleasure.

Now, brothers and sisters, to turn the text around the other way, I trust we shall always have a hope of final perseverance. He who has begun the good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Are we, therefore, as some suppose we might be, careless about how we live? Oh, no! We are afraid of sinning! The very shadow of sin is obnoxious to us! We hate the garment spotted by the flesh. The very appearance of evil terrifies us! How is that consistent with the full belief in our perseverance unto the end? If we cannot explain it, many of us know that it is practically so.

So also we have a hope, most sure and steadfast, that we ourselves shall, like our Representative, enter into heaven. But for all that we have a daily fear lest we should seem to come short of it! We know

that “there remains a rest to the people of God,” and we are persuaded that we belong to that happy company. Yet we keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. If you ask, “How can a man feel these two things?” I answer—he does feel them, and if he is born of God, and God delights in him—he feels them pretty much with equal force. As two battledores keep up the shuttlecock, so often I believe a man is kept in his right place by the action of these two contrary forces as they seem to be. As the earth goes round the sun, keeping in its orbit, it is under two influences—the centrifugal that would drive it off at a tangent, and the centripetal that would pull it into the sun at once—but between the two, it keeps its proper course, and so does the Christian. Oh, that the centripetal force might speedily conquer the centrifugal, that we might fly unto our God, and be forever with Him rejoicing in the fullness of eternal happiness! I hope, brothers and sisters, that we who believe have a hope of perfection. In some senses, we have it already, for we are complete in Christ Jesus, and accepted in the Beloved. But even that blessed assurance is attended with a measure of fear. We are mourning our transgressions, our defects, and our shortcomings. We are not what we ought to be, we are not what we wish to be, we are not what we shall be—and while we grasp the, “*shall be*,” with the hand of faith, we sigh to think that as yet we have realized so little of its blessedness! Brothers and sisters, may God grant to us hope whenever we have fear, and fear whenever we have hope. May we have hope in God’s power to deliver us when we are under the fear of any trial or danger! May we have hope in God’s providence to arrange for us whenever we are poor, or sick, or in any straits or difficulties! When we have any fear of God’s wrath, let us have hope in His pity, and whenever we are doubting or troubled, let us have hope in God’s promises which cannot fail, but, in due season, shall surely be fulfilled.

This fear, mingled with hope, is, I believe, to be the contexture of our religious life. I know that it is of mine with regard to the world at large and the church at large. I have a daily fear and trembling for the state of the church of this present time. If anybody asks the watchman what he sees, I answer that I see no morning coming, but deeper darkness constantly falling upon us. Yet even that fear is mixed with hope, for I am certain that God’s truth will, in the end, win the day. It does not matter which way the current of modern thought may happen to run, the truth will come to the front, by-and-by. Puritan divines are at a great discount today, but I believe that some of us will live to see them prized more than they ever were! The doctrines of grace are, for a while, trod in the mire, but after infidelity has emptied the chapels, and the churches have lost the true missionary spirit, they will come back again to the grand old truths of the gospel, and we who are spared shall see a revival of them such as our hearts have longed for! Whatever we fear for Zion in her travail, we have hope in the birth that shall come of it by God’s good grace!

This same principle ought, I think, to be applied to our ordinary daily life. We hope in God’s mercy whenever we are in trouble, but we fear whenever we are prosperous. If we are in health, then we fear, for we may be struck down in a moment. If we are sick, then we hope, for we may be raised up just as quickly. If we are in adversity, then we hope, for the longest tide turns, at last. When we are prospering, then we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God causes to pass before us. I, for one, must say that I usually feel confident and joyous whenever I am in trouble. But whenever I have a grand day of success, I go home sinking into my shoes, for I am always afraid that something evil will follow!

It is with that blended hope and fear that we come to God in prayer—trembling to take upon ourselves to speak to Him, for we are but dust and ashes—yet coming with holy boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace. In this way, also, we go to our service for our Lord. Luther said that, often, when he went to preach, his knees knocked together for fear. But when he was preaching, he had such hope in God’s mercy that he was like a lion! That is the way we expect to die. We will go to our dying bed, and gather up our feet with fear, for we are men—but also with hope, for we are men of God—fearing the Lord, but hoping in His mercy!

III. I have not time to preach upon THE BLESSINGS IMPLIED IN THIS DIVINE FAVOR, so I will give you only an outline of them.

When God takes pleasure in any man, the outcome of His favor may be learned from the pleasure which we take in our own child. For instance, when any mother takes pleasure in her child, she likes to *think* of her child, she likes to *look* at her child, she likes to *speak* to her child, and she likes to *minister* to her child. She loves her child’s prattling talk, its little broken syllables are all music to her ears. She takes pleasure in all that her child is, in all it does, in all it is to be. It is altogether a delight to her. Now, without enlarging upon this point, I will say that if you fear the Lord and hope in His mercy, God takes

as much delight in you as you do in your dear child—and far more, because God’s is an infinite mind, and from it there comes infinite delight, so that He views you with infinite complacency!

Can you believe it? You do not view yourself so—I hope that you do not, but God *sees you in Christ*. He sees that in you that is yet to be in you! He sees in you that which will make you grow into a heavenly being, and, therefore, He takes delight in you. It does not matter what others think of you. I want you to go home and feel, “If my Heavenly Father takes delight in me, it really does not concern me if my fellow creatures do not understand or appreciate me.” If you and I want to be pleased by other people’s good opinion, we shall lay ourselves open to be wounded by other people’s *bad* opinion! Live so as to please *God*, and if your fellows are not pleased, well then, they must be displeased. It should be the one aim of your life to be able to say, “I always do those things which please Him.” Walk with God by faith, as Enoch did, that you may have a like testimony to his, “he pleased God.” And if you have pleased God, what matters it who is not pleased? Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, and praise the name of the Lord, for He “takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

I trust that there is some poor sinner here who can squeeze into the kingdom of God through that description. “I fear Him,” says one, “I have a feeble hope in His mercy.” God bless you, dear friend! He takes pleasure in you! If you are but consciously guilty of sin, and therefore fear—and if you are but believably looking to Christ, alone, and therefore hope, then you are His, and His forever! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 147.*

This Book of Psalms ends its golden stream in a cataract of praise. The last Psalms are Hallelujah Psalms. This one begins and ends, as several others do, with “Hallelujah.”

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God.*

He is, “our God,” whether He is the God of other men or not. He is “our God” by His choice of us, and by our choice of Him—“our God” by eternal covenant, to whom we also pledge ourselves: “*This* God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” Then let us “sing praises unto our God,” for, “it is good” so to do.

1. *For it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*

It is the most pleasurable of all exercises! It is the occupation of heaven. “It is pleasant.” It is delightful to the heart. Nothing tends to lift us out of sorrow and trouble like giving ourselves to singing the high praises of God. “It is good.” “It is pleasant.” “It is comely.” It is becoming, fitting, beautiful! Praise and Jehovah should go together. He is so worthy to be praised that to withhold His praises would be an uncomely thing! But to adore Him, to magnify Him, is the very beauty of holiness!

2. *The LORD does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.*

There is the first reason for praise. The Jews were pleased to behold their city rising out of the heap of ruins. They were glad to see the scattered ones, the outcasts, coming back to their native place, and entering into citizenship in Zion. Shall not the Church of God, of which Jerusalem was a type, praise God that He is steadily and solidly building up a Church to His praise and glory? He is building it out of strange materials—outcast sinners who were far from Him by wicked works, are brought near by the blood of Christ! Stones from nature’s quarry are changed into living stones, and then built up into a living temple for His praise. “Jehovah does build up Jerusalem.” Not the minister, not the workers in the church, but the Lord Himself does it! “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” An uplifted Christ draws all men to Him! The gathering power is with Him. “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Let us praise God that this takes place, in a measure, in our midst, and in other churches where His name is honored.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.*

He is such a condescending God that He walks the hospitals, and is familiar with despondency—and enters in sympathy into the cases of distress which others shun because they are unable to help. Where He comes as the Good Physician, “He heals the broken in heart.”

4. *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.*

I call your attention, dear friends, to the wonderful change from the sick to the stars—from the broken in heart to the starry hosts of heaven! Our God is equally at home with the little and with the great—with stars, which to us are countless—and with men, who to us are comfortless! God is just as great in

dealing with our sorrows, as in guiding the stars in their courses! He is as great as He is good, and as good as He is great!

5. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.*

There are three things here predicated of Him—first, that He is great in Himself, great in the vastness of His being. Next, that He is of great power, and then that He is of great, yes, of *infinite understanding*! Here is the mercy of it all, that He brings that greatness, that vastness of power, that infinity of knowledge to bear upon poor broken hearts—that He is just as wise in meeting our distresses, as He is in marshalling the stars that He has made. Oh, what a God is ours!

6. *The LORD lifts up the meek; He casts the wicked down to the ground.*

Ours is an amazing God. There is none like He. He is undoing all the things that are, turning things upside down. The lowly, He lifts up, but the proud He throws down to the ground, even into the dust. This is His way, and this is always a special note in the songs of God's people. Remember how Mary sang, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away"? This singular behavior of our God, who has no respect unto the persons of men, is a special cause for our thankfulness. Therefore, let us magnify His name!

7. *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.*

Let every form of melody and harmony be consecrated to Him. Give Him thanks-giving and thanks-living. And as He is always giving to you, take care that you give to Him what you can—namely, your thanks.

8, 9. *Who covers the heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.*

God, the Infinite One, makes the clouds—not the laws of nature, which are dead, inoperative things without Him! But Jehovah Himself fashions the clouds, and prepares the rain. There is an infinite wisdom about the preparation of every raindrop, and the sending of it in such form and way that it shall be balanced upon each blade of grass, and shall hang there glittering in its perfection, and nourish even the least herb of the field. Only infinite wisdom could have thought of or prepared a single shower of rain! This rain is for the grass—does God think of the *grass*? Yes, not only of the cedars of Lebanon, but of grass, and not only of the grass that grows in the fruitful meadow, but of those little tufts which are, here and there, upon the rugged mountains! He thinks of clouds, of rain, and of grass which He makes to grow upon the mountains, that He may feed cattle. Does God, the high and lofty One, stoop to give to the beast His food? Ah, and more than that! He feeds all those wild birds that seem of no use to men—even the young ravens which clamor for the parent bird to return and fill them when they are hungry. Does God turn feeder of ravens? Ah, so it is. Then, again, blessed be His name! Praise you the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to such a condescending God as this! I am sure that you can draw the inferences for your own comfort. Do you seem like a little bit of grass on the bare mountainside? He has clouds and rain for you! Do you seem like a neglected bird in its nest, crying for food? He who feeds the ravens will feed you! The Hebrew has it, "the sons of the ravens," and if God gives food to the sons of the ravens, He will certainly feed His own sons!

10, 11. *He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.*

Again, you see, it is the same strain. It is not the great things or the mighty things that attract Him, but the little things, and the weak things, and the despised things.

12, 13. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.*

There shall be special hallelujahs from God's own people. His holy city, and His holy hill should magnify the thrice-holy God. O beloved, if we are, indeed, children of that Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all believers, let us prepare a new song to the Lord our God for all His mercy to us! Praise Him in your own houses, in "Jerusalem." Praise Him in *His* own house, in "Zion." Let your praise thus be continuous, where you dwell, and where He dwells! "He has strengthened the bars of your gates." The fortifications are finished, and He has made all secure. Therefore, magnify His name!

14. *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat.*

When the Church is peaceful, and when the gospel fills the saints—and they feed upon it, and feel it to be the very finest of the wheat—should not God be praised? Does not the hallelujah come in here, again? Praise you the Lord for spiritual meat, and spiritual peace, and spiritual security!

15. *He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly.*

Oriental kings made a point of having swift postal arrangements by which they could send their decrees to the extremity of their dominions, sometimes on horses, and sometimes on swift camels. But God's command, God's decree, God's "word runs very swiftly." He dwells in the midst of His people, and He sends forth from Zion His decree. He dispatches His couriers, and they run very swiftly to work His will. It is so in providence—it is assuredly so in grace! As to providence, see what God does—

16. *He gives snow like wool.*

People say, nowadays, "It snows." They said among the Hebrews, "HE gives snow." There seems to be a tendency to get further and further away from God in these very learned days. If this is all that science can do for us—put God further off—it shall be our injury rather than our blessing! "He gives snow like wool." The flakes are like the fleece, and fall softly. Snow clothes the earth with a white, warm garment, as the well-washed sheep are clothed with wool.

16. *He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.*

There are black frosts and white frosts—and you know how, sometimes, vegetation appears to be burnt up with cold. It is God who does it all—

"He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes."

17. *He casts forth His ice like morsels.*

The hailstones come like morsels—like *crumbs*, that is the word—like crumbs of ice, or, as the ice is formed upon the lake, it comes like *crusts*. Either way, "He casts forth His ice like morsels."

17. *Who can stand before His cold?*

If God displays Himself as fire, who can stand against His flames? Or if He chooses to display Himself in cold, there is as much of consuming force about intense cold as about vehement heat! "Who can stand before His cold?"

18. *He sends out His word, and melts them.*

The icebergs float southward, and are melted. The rivers that had been held in chains of ice leap into liberty, and all at the word of the Lord—"He sends out His word, and melts them."

18. *He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow.*

"This is the result of the laws of nature." So say those who are still in nature's darkness! "This is the work of God," say those who have come out of that darkness into His marvelous light!

19. *He shows His word to Jacob.*

Observe that when God's people know God's Word, it is as much the work of God as when the waters are loosed from their bands of ice!

19. *His statutes and His judgments to Israel.*

The Lord does it according to His own sovereign will.

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD.*

Here, you see again, is a peculiar reason for thanksgiving! "Praise you Jehovah." "It is good to sing praises unto *our* God, for He has dealt with us in a special manner, with peculiar and discriminating grace. 'He has not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.'" Therefore are they silent, but let us not be dumb. With such a revelation as we have, with such teachings of His Spirit to make the Lord known to us, let us not be ungrateful, but always praise His name!

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