

A FEAR TO BE DESIRED NO. 2801

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 19, 1902.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“And shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.”
Hosea 3:5.*

THIS passage refers in the first place to the Jews. If we read the whole verse, and the preceding one, we shall see that they describe the present sad condition of God's ancient people, and inspire us with hope concerning their future: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim; afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” From this, and many other texts of Scripture, we may conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Jews shall, one day, acknowledge Jesus to be their King. The Son of David—who is here, doubtless, called by the name of David, and who, when He died upon the cross, had Pilate's declaration inscribed over His head, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”—will then be owned by them as their King, and then shall they be restored to more than their former joy and glory. God has great things in store for the seed of Abraham in the latter days. He has not finally cast them away, and He will be true to that covenant which He made with their fathers, and on Judaea's plains shall roam a happy people, who shall lift up their songs of praise unto Jehovah in the name of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. Whenever that shall happen, we, or those who will then be living, may know that the latter days have fully come, because it is foretold here, and in other passages, that this is what will occur in the latter days. I am not going to attempt any explanation of the prophetic intimations concerning the future, but this one fact is plain enough—that, when the end of the world is approaching, and the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in, and all the splendor of the latter days has really commenced, then “shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”

On this occasion I intend only to call your attention to this expression, “They shall fear the Lord and His goodness;” for what Israel will do, in a state of grace, is precisely what all spiritual Israelites do when the grace of God rests upon them. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, fills the heart, and the goodness of the Lord becomes the source and fountain of that fear in the hearts of all those whom the Lord has blessed with His grace. So I shall, first of all, ask you to notice *a distinction which is to be observed*; secondly, *a grace which is to be cultivated*; and then, thirdly, *a sin which is to be repented of in the case of many*.

I. First, then, here is A DISTINCTION TO BE OBSERVED.

Human language is necessarily imperfect. Since man's fall, and especially since the confusion of tongues at Babel, there has not only been a difference in speech between one nation and another, but also between one individual and another. Probably, we do not all mean exactly the same thing by any one word that we use; there is just a shade of difference between your meaning and mine. The confusion of tongues went much further than we sometimes realize; and so completely did it confuse our language that we do not, on all occasions, mean quite the same thing to ourselves even when we use the same word. Hence, “fear” is a word which has a very wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear which is to be shunned and avoided—that fear which perfect love casts out—because it has torment. But there is another sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love and without which there would be no joy even in the presence

of God. Instead of perfect love casting out this fear, perfect love nourishes and cherishes it, and, by communion with it, itself derives strength from it. Between the fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God's great power and justice which the devils have, and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between hell and heaven.

In the verse from which our text is taken, that difference is clearly indicated: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord;" so that *this fear is connected with seeking the Lord*. It is a fear which draws them towards God, and makes them search for Him. You know how the fear of the ungodly influences them; it makes them afraid of God, so they say, "Where shall we flee from His presence?" They would take the wings of the morning if they could, and fly to the uttermost part of the earth, if they had any hope that God could not reach them there; at the last, when this fear will take full possession of them, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them from the face of Him who will then sit upon the throne, whose wrath they will have such cause to dread. The fear of God, as it exists in unrenewed men, is a force which always drives them further and yet further away from God. They never get any rest of mind until they have ceased to think of Him; if a thought of God should, perchance, steal into their mind, fear at once lays hold upon them again, and that fear urges them to flee from God.

But the fear mentioned in our text draws to God. The man who has this fear in his heart cannot live without seeking God's face, confessing his guilt before Him, and receiving pardon from Him. He seeks God because of this fear. Just as Noah, "moved with fear," built the ark wherein he and his household were saved, so do these men, "moved with fear," draw near unto God, and seek to find salvation through His love and grace. Always notice this distinction, and observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin, but the fear that draws us towards God, as with silken bonds, is a virtue to be cultivated.

This appears even more clearly in the Hebrew, for they who best understand that language tell us that this passage should be read thus, "They shall fear *toward* the Lord, and *toward* His goodness." *This fear leans toward the Lord*. When you really know God, you shall be thrice happy if you do run toward Him, falling down before Him, worshipping Him with bowed head yet glad heart, all the while fearing toward Him, and not away from Him. Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God's commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God, and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God, that he may be acquainted with Him and be at peace.

It is also worthy of notice that *this fear is connected with the Messiah*: "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King"—who stands here as the type of Jesus the Messiah, the King of Israel; and further on it is said, "They shall fear the Lord and His goodness;" and I should not do wrong if I were to say that Christ is Jehovah's goodness—that, in His blessed person, you have all the goodness, and mercy, and grace of God condensed and concentrated. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." So, that fear which is a sign of grace in the heart—that fear which we ought all to seek after—always links itself to Christ Jesus. If you fear God, and know not that there is Mediator between God and men, you will never think of approaching Him. God is a consuming fire, then how can you draw near to Him apart from Christ? If you fear God, and know not of Christ's atonement, how can you approach Him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God, and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the divine mercy seat. If you know not Christ, you will never come to God. Your fear must link itself with the goodness of God as displayed in the person of His dear Son, or else it cannot be that seeking fear, that, fear toward the Lord, of which our text speaks. It will be a fleeing fear—a fear that will drive you further and yet further away from God, into greater and deeper darkness—into dire destruction—in fact, into that pit whose bottomless abyss swallows up all hope, all rest, and all joy forever.

II. Let this distinction be kept in mind, and then we may safely go on to consider, in the second place, **THE GRACE WHICH IS TO BE CULTIVATED**: "They shall fear the Lord and His goodness."

We will divide the one thought into two; and, first, I will speak about that fear of God which is the work of the Holy Spirit, a token of grace, a sign of salvation, and a precious treasure to be ever kept in the heart.

What is this fear of God? I answer; first, *it is a sense of awe of His greatness*. Have you never felt this sacred awe stealing insensibly over your spirit, hushing, and calming you, and bowing you down before

the Lord? It will come, sometimes, in the consideration of the great works of nature. Gazing upon the vast expanse of waters—looking up to the innumerable stars, examining the wing of an insect, and seeing there the matchless skill of God displayed in the minute; or standing in a thunderstorm, watching, as best you can, the flashes of lightning, and listening to the thunder of Jehovah's voice, have you not often shrunk into yourself, and said, "Great God, how terrible are You!"—not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father's wealth, his father's wisdom, his father's power—happy, and at home, but feeling oh, so little! We are less than nothing; we are all but annihilated in the presence of the great eternal, infinite, invisible All-in-all. Gracious men often come into this state of mind and heart by watching the works of God; so they do when they observe what He does in providence. Dr. Watts truly sings—

*"Here He exalts neglected worms
To scepters and a crown;
Anon the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down."*

The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in His sight. "The nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance," that has not weight enough to turn the scale. We talk about the greatness of mankind; but "all nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." Again Dr. Watts wisely sings—

*"Great God! How infinite are Thou!
What worthless worms are we!"*

When we realize this, we are filled with a holy awe as we think of God's greatness, and the result of that is that we are moved to fall before Him in reverent adoration. We turn to the Word of God, and there we see further proofs of His greatness in all His merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners—and especially in the matchless redemption worked out by His well-beloved Son, every part of which is full of the divine glory; and as we gaze upon that glory with exceeding joy, we shrink to nothing before the Eternal, and the result again is lowly adoration. We bow down, and adore and worship the living God, with a joyful, tender fear, which both lays us low, and lifts us very high, for never do we seem to be nearer to heaven's golden throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship Him whom it does not see, but in whose realized presence it trembles with sacred delight.

It is the same fear, but looked at from another point of view, which has regard to *the holiness of God*. What a holy being is the great Jehovah of hosts! There is in Him no fault, no deficiency, no redundancy; He is whole, and therefore holy; there is nothing there but Himself, the wholly perfect God. "Holy! Holy! Holy!" is a fit note for the mysterious living creatures to sound out before His throne above; for, all along, He has acted according to the principle of unsullied holiness. Though blasphemers have tried, many times, to—

*"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God,"—*

they have always failed, and still He sits in the lonely majesty of His absolute perfection, while they, like brute beasts, crouch far beneath Him, and despise what they cannot comprehend. But to a believing heart, God is all purity. His light is "as the color of the terrible crystal," of which Ezekiel writes; His brightness is so great that no man can approach it. We are so sinful that when we get even a glimpse of the divine holiness, we are filled with fear, and we cry, with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is a kind of fear which we have need to cultivate, for it leads to repentance, and confession of sin, to aspirations after holiness, and to the utter rejection of all self-complacency and self-conceit. God grant that we may be completely delivered from all those forms of pride and evil!

The fear of God also takes another form, that is, *the fear of His Fatherhood which leads us to reverence Him*. When divine grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God; namely, that we have become His sons and daughters. Then we realize that we have received "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Now, we cannot truly cry unto God, "Abba, Father," without at the same time feeling, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." When we recognize that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," children of the Highest, adopted into the family of the Eternal Himself, we feel at once, as the spirit of childhood works within us, that we both love and fear our great Father in heaven,

who has loved us with an everlasting love, and has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.”

In this childlike fear, there is not an atom of that fear which signifies being afraid. We, who believe in Jesus, are not afraid of our Father; God forbid that we ever should be. The nearer we can get to Him, the happier we are. Our highest wish is to be forever with Him and to be lost in Him; but, still, we pray that we may not grieve Him; we beseech Him to keep us from turning aside from Him; we ask for His tender pity towards our infirmities, and plead with Him to forgive us and to deal graciously with us for His dear Son’s sake. As loving children, we feel a holy awe and reverence as we realize our relationship to Him who is our Father in heaven—a dear, loving, tender, pitiful Father, yet our Heavenly Father, who “is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

This holy fear takes a further form when *our fear of God’s Sovereignty leads us to obey Him as our King*; for He, to whom we pray, and in whom we trust, is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and we gladly own His sovereignty. We see Him sitting upon a throne which is dependent upon no human or angelic power to sustain it. The kings of the earth must ask their fellow men to march in their ranks in order to sustain their rules, but our King “sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be” a king. As the Creator of all things, and all beings, He has a right to the obedience of all the creatures He has made. Again I say that we, who believe in Jesus, are not afraid of God even as our King, for He has made us also to be kings and priests, and we are to reign with Him, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever. Yet we tremble before Him lest we should be rebellious against Him in the slightest degree. With a childlike fear, we are afraid least one revolting thought or one treacherous wish should ever come into our mind or heart to stain our absolute loyalty to Him. Horror takes hold upon us when we hear others deny that “the Lord reigns;” but even the thought that we should ever do this grieves us exceedingly, and we are filled with that holy fear, which moves us to obey every command of our gracious King so far as we know it to be His command. Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” It is not because we are afraid of Him, but because we delight in Him, that we fear before Him with an obedient, reverential fear; and, beloved, I do firmly believe that when this kind of fear of God works itself out to the full, it crystallizes into love. So excellent, so glorious, so altogether everything that could be desired, so far above our highest thought or wish, are You, O Jehovah, that we lie before You, and shrink into nothing; yet, even as we do so, we feel another sensation springing up within us. We feel that we love You; and, as we decrease in our own estimation of ourselves, we feel that we love You more and more. As we realize our own nothingness, we are more than ever conscious of the greatness of our God. “Your heart shall fear, and be enlarged,” says the prophet Isaiah, and so it comes to pass with us. The more we fear the Lord, the more we love Him, until this becomes to us the true fear of God, to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. May He bring us to this blessed climax by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit!

Now I want to dwell, with somewhat of emphasis, upon the second part of this fear: “They shall fear the Lord *and His goodness*.” It may at first seem, to some people, a strange thing that we should fear God’s goodness; but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes. How can we fear God’s goodness? I speak what I have often felt, and I believe many of you can do the same as you look back upon the goodness of God to you—saving you from sin, and making you to be His child; and as you think of all His goodness to you in the dispensations of His providence. You may, perhaps, be like Jacob, who left his father’s house with his wallet and his staff; and when he came back with a family that formed two bands, and with abundance of all that he could desire, he must have been astonished at what God had done for him. And when David sat upon his throne in Jerusalem, surrounded by wealth and splendor, as he recollected how he had fed his flock in the wilderness, and afterwards had been hunted, by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains, he might well say, “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?”

In this way, *God’s goodness often fills us with amazement*, and amazement has in it an element of fear. We are astonished at the Lord’s gracious dealings with us, and we say to Him, “Why have You been so good to me, for so many years, and in such multitude of forms? Why have You manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me? You have treated me as if I had never grieved or offended You. You have been as good to me as if I had deserved great blessings at Your hands. Had You paid me wages, like a hired

servant, You would never have given me such sweetness and such love as You have now lavished upon me, though I was once a prodigal, and wandered far from You. O God, Your love is like the sun; I cannot gaze upon it, its brightness would blind my eyes! I fear because of Your goodness.” Do you know, dear friends, what this expression means? If a sense of God’s goodness comes upon you in all its force, you will feel that God is wonderfully great to have been so good to you. Most of us have had friends who have become tired of us after a while. Possibly, we have had some very kind friends, who are not yet tired of us; but, still, they have failed us every now and then in some points; either their power could not meet our necessity, or they were not willing to do what we needed. But our God has poured out His mercy for us like a river; it has flowed on without a break. These many years He has continued to bless us, and has heaped up His mercies, mountain upon mountain, until it has seemed as though He would reach the very stars with the lofty pinnacles of His love. What shall we say to all this? Shall we not fear Him, and adore Him, and bless Him for all the goodness that He has made to pass before us; and, all the while, feel that even to kiss the hem of His garment, or to be beneath His footstool, is too great an honor for us?

Then there will come upon us, when we are truly grateful to God for His goodness toward us, *a sense of our own responsibility*; and we shall say, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” We shall feel that we cannot render to Him anything compared with what we ought to render; and there will come upon us this fear—that we shall never be able to live at all consistently with the high position which His grace has given to us. As God said concerning His ancient people, we shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that He has procured for us. It will seem as though He had set us on the top of a high mountain, and had bidden us walk along that lofty ridge; it is a ridge of favor and privilege, but it is so elevated that we fear lest our brain should reel, and our feet should slip, because of the height of God’s mercy to us. Have you never felt like that, beloved? If God has greatly exalted you with His favor and love, I am sure you must have felt like that many a time.

Then, next, *this holy fear is near akin to gratitude*. The fear of a man, who really knows the love and goodness of God, will be somewhat of this kind. He will fear lest he should really be, or should seem to be, ungrateful. “What,” he asks, “can I do? I am drowned in mercy. It is not as though my ship were sailing in a sea of mercy; I have been so loaded with the favor of the Lord that my vessel has gone right down, and the ocean of God’s love and mercy has rolled right over the masthead. What can I do, O Lord? If You had given me only a little mercy, I might have done something, in return, to express my gratitude. But, oh! Your great mercy in electing me, in redeeming me, in converting me, and in preserving me, and in all the goodness of Your providence toward me—what can I do in return for all these favors? I feel struck mute; and I am afraid lest I should have a mute heart as well as a mute tongue; I fear lest I should grieve You by anything that looks like ingratitude.”

Then the child of God begins, next, *to fear lest he should become proud*; “for,” he says, “I have noticed that when God thus favors some men, they begin to exalt themselves, and to think that they are persons of great importance; so, if the Lord makes the stream of my life flow very joyously, I may imagine that it is because there is some good thing in me, and be foolish enough to begin to ascribe the glory of it to myself.” A true saint often trembles concerning this matter; he sometimes gets even afraid of his mercies. He knows that his trials and troubles never did him any hurt; but he perceives that, sometimes, God’s goodness has intoxicated him as with sweet wine, so he begins to be almost afraid of the goodness of his God to him. He thinks to himself, “Shall I be unworthy of all this favor, and walk in a way that is inconsistent with it?” He looks a little ahead, and he knows that the flesh is frail, and that good men have often been found in very slippery places, and he says, “What if, after all this, I should be a backslider? You, O Lord, have brought me into the banqueting house, and Your banner over me is love; you have stayed me with flagons, and comforted me with apples; You have laid bare Your very heart to me, and made me know that I am a man greatly beloved! Shall I, after all this, ever turn aside from You? Will the ungodly ever point at me, and say, ‘Aha! Aha! Is this the man after God’s own heart? Is this the disciple who said he would die rather than deny his Master?’” Such a fear as that very properly comes over us at times, and then we tremble because of all the goodness which God has made to pass before us.

I think you can see, dear friends, without my needing to enlarge further upon this point, that while a time of sorrow and suffering is often, to the Christian, a time of confidence in his God; on the other hand, a time of prosperity is to the wise man, a time of holy fear. Not that he is ungrateful, but he is afraid that he may be. Not that he is proud; he is truly humble because he is afraid lest he should become proud. Not

that he loves the things of the world, but he is afraid lest his heart should get away from God, so he fears because of all the Lord's goodness to him. May the Lord always keep us in that state of fear, for it is a healthy condition for us to be in. Those who walk so very proudly, and with too great confidence, are generally the ones who first tumble down. My observation and experience have taught me this; when I have met with anyone who knew that he was a very good man, and who boasted to other people that he was a very good man—he has generally proved to be like some of those pears that we sometimes see in the shop—very handsome to look at, but sleepy and rotten all through. Then, on the other hand, I have noticed a great many other people, who have always been afraid that they would go wrong, and who have trembled and feared at almost every step they took. They have feared lest they should grieve the Lord, and they have cried to Him, day and night, "Lord, uphold us;" and He has done so, and they have been enabled to keep their garments unspotted to their life's end. So, my prayer is, that I may never cease to feel this holy fear before God, and that I may never get to fancy, for a moment, that there is, or ever can be, anything in me to cause me to boast or to glory in myself. May God save all of us from that evil; and the more we receive of His goodness, the more may we fear, with childlike fear, in His presence!

III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last point; which is, A SIN TO BE REPENTED OF.

I cannot help fearing that I am addressing some to whom my text does not apply except by way of contrast. Are there not some of you, who are unsaved, and yet who do not fear God? O sirs, may the Holy Spirit make you to fear and tremble before Him! You have cause enough to fear. If you live all day long without even thinking of God, or if, when you do think of Him, you try to smother the thought at once—if you say that you can get on very well without Him, and that life is happy enough without religion—I could weep for you because you do not weep for yourselves. You say, "We are rich;" yet, all the while, you are wretched, and miserable, and poor. Your poverty is all the worse because you fancy that you are rich. You are also blind. That is bad enough, yet you say, "We can see." It is doubly sad when the spiritually blind declare that they can see, for they will never ask for the sacred eye-salve, or go to the great Oculist who can open blind eyes, so long as they are satisfied with their present condition. It is a great pity that many unconverted men do not fear God even with a servile fear. If they would only begin with that, it might prove to be the lowest rung of the heavenly ladder, and lead on to the blessed fear which is the portion of the children of God.

There are others of you, I am afraid, who never fear either God or His goodness. How I wish you would do so, for the Lord has been very good to you. You were saved at sea after you had been wrecked. You were raised up from fever when others died. You have prospered in business, on the whole, though you have had some struggles. Blessed with children, and made happy in your home—all this you owe to the God whom you have never acknowledged. The goodness of God to some ungodly men is truly a wonder. I think, when they sit down at night, when everybody else has gone to bed, and remember how they began life with scarcely a shilling to bless themselves with, yet God has multiplied their substance and given them much to rejoice in, their hearts ought to be full of gratitude towards their Benefactor. I would like all such people to recollect what God said by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." Take care, O you ungrateful souls, that the Lord does not begin to strip you of the mercies which you have failed to appreciate! I pray that you may be led to confess from where all these blessings came, and to cry, "My Father, You shall be my Guide, henceforth and forever. Since You have dealt so lovingly and tenderly with me, I will come and confess my sin to You, and trust in Your dear Son as my Savior and Friend, that I may henceforth be led and commanded by You alone, and may fear before You all the days of my life."

May God grant to every one of us the grace to believe in Jesus, and to rest in Him, and then to walk in the fear of the Lord all our days, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103, 174, 214.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*PSALM 103.***

Verse 1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.*

We ought to be always blessing God; this sacred employment should be like an atmosphere surrounding us at all times. Yet there are special seasons when we feel as if we must wake ourselves up, and brace ourselves up, for some special adoration, talking to ourselves as the psalmist does here—

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:*

Alas! That forgetfulness of God's benefits is an evil kind of worm that eats into the very heart of our praise. Oh, for a retentive memory concerning the lovingkindness of the Lord! Come, my heart, you have been thinking of many things while you have been away from the house of prayer; now forget them. Perhaps you have even dwelt upon your sorrows, and remembered the wormwood and the gall; if so, now let those sad memories vanish, "and forget not all His benefits."

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities;*

What a great "all" that is! From your childhood until now, you have been full of iniquities, and the Lord has been equally full of forgiveness.

3. *Who heals all your diseases;*

There is no other physician like Him; and all human physicians, whatever skill they may possess, derive it from Him. Blessed be the healing God!

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction;*

Else had you, long ago, gone down into the pit; but redemption has kept you out of it. Your natural life and your spiritual life have both been preserved to you through the precious blood of Christ.

4. *Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*

We talk about crowned heads; there are many such here in this assembly. Let everyone whose head is crowned "with lovingkindness and tender mercies" magnify the name of the crowning Lord.

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.*

You were down on the ground lately, with all your feathers shed, but they have grown again, and you are up on the wing once more. Your youth has been given back to you; renew, then, your praises of your God; with the dew of your youth restored to you, let the dew of your gratitude also abound. Who would not bless the Lord when he knows the blessedness of sin pardoned, a wounded spirit healed, the life redeemed from destruction, youth restored like the eagle's, and the whole being crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies?

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

Therefore, let the oppressed praise Him. Let the justice, which adorns His throne, be the subject of our constant delight. There is no act of oppression, on the part of the great ones of the earth, at which He will wink: "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.*

Bless Him for having thus revealed Himself, giving us His Holy Word, in which we see Him as in a mirror. When God makes Himself known to His people, then is the time for them to praise Him. You can scarcely worship an unknown God; but when He makes Himself known by special revelation in your heart, then you must and you will praise Him.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

Therefore, again praise Him. All who know and love the Lord should form a great orchestra continually magnifying His holy name.

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.*

So that, if you are just now being chided by Him, if you have some consciousness of His anger, begin to bless Him that it will not last long: "He will not always chide." Behold the rainbow painted on the storm cloud, and bless the name of the Lord even while you are under His afflicting hand.

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

Therefore, praise Him again and again. Had He dealt with us as we deserve, we should not have been here; but we are still here, on praying ground, and on pleading terms with the Most High; therefore, let us praise Him.

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.*

Such great mercy as this should have the highest praise of which we are capable. This verse speaks of the height of God's mercy; the next one tells of its breadth:—

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

They are gone never to return; it is impossible that they should be imputed against us any more forever; therefore, praise Him to the very utmost.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.*

Notice that as this sacred song rises, it gets tenderer; if it is not quite so jubilant, the praise is all the deeper, and quite as thrilling. One of the sweetest thoughts that we can have concerning God is that which relates to His fatherly tenderness toward His children.

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*

Let His name be praised for this. Dust must be handled daintily, lest it should resolve itself into its separate particles, and God thus delicately handles us.

15, 16. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

Yet does God think of us, even as He does of the grass; and as He gives to each blade of grass its own drop of dew, so do we seem to feel hanging about each one of us a glistening drop of mercy, for which let us praise His holy name as the sunlight of His favor sparkles in every drop of His lovingkindness.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.*

Then, surely, we must bless God for His favor to our posterity, for His lovingkindness, not only to ourselves, but also to our children, and our children's children. As we look back, we praise the God of our fathers; and as we look forward, we praise the God of our children's children.

19. *The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.*

For which again let us say, "Hallelujah!" The Lord of Hosts is no dethroned monarch; He has not lost His power to govern all whom He has made: "His kingdom rules over all."

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.*

Magnify Him more than ever, if that is possible, you mighty hosts who—

*"Day without night
Circle His throne rejoicing."*

21, 22. *Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.*

The praise is spread widely now, over all the universe; yet, O my heart, do not forget your own personal note in it: "O Bless the Lord, O my soul."

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

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