

GOD'S JEWELS NO. 2970

A SERMON
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*“And they shall be Mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.”
Malachi 3:17.*

THESE words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men, when they scoffed at God's altar, and said of His service, “What a weariness it is!” and scornfully asked, “What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?” Yet even those dark nights were cheered by bright stars. Though the great congregations of God's house were but a mockery, yet there were smaller assemblies which God gazed upon with delight. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who “feared the Lord” and who “spoke often, one to another,” and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes! He “listened and heard,” and He so approved of that which He heard, that He took note of it, and declared that He would publish it. “A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Yes, and He valued so much these hidden ones, “faithful among the faithless found,” that He called them His “jewels.” And He declared that in the great day when He should gather together His “segullah,” His regalia—the peculiar treasure of kings—He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls! “They shall be Mine,” He said, “in the day when I gather up My jewels into My casket to be there forever.”

We will try to work out this metaphor of jewels. Our first point shall be that *God's people are compared to jewels*. Our second, *the making up of the jewels*. And our third, *the privilege of being found among them*.

I. THE LORD COMPARES HIS PEOPLE TO JEWELS.

From the remotest antiquity, *men have thought much of precious stones*. Almost fabulous prices have been paid for them, and there have been instances in which most bloody wars have been waged for the possession of a certain jewel renowned for its brilliance and size. Men hunt after gold, but the diamond they pursue with even greater eagerness. Five hundred men will work for a whole year in the diamond mines of Brazil when the entire produce of the year might be held in the hollow of your hand! And princes will give whole principalities, or barter the estates of half a nation in order to possess one peculiar brilliant of rare excellence. We wonder not, therefore, that the Lord, who elsewhere likens the precious sons of Zion to fine gold, should here compare them to jewels. However little they may be esteemed by men, the great Jewel-Valuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, esteems them as precious beyond all price! His life was as dear to Him as life is to us, and yet all that He had, even His life, did He give for His elect ones. He counted down the price of His jewels in drops of bloody sweat in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane. His very heart was set astir, streaming with priceless blood in order that He might redeem His people. We may compare our Lord to that merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when He had found the one pearl of His Church, for the joy thereof went and sold all that He had that He might make it His own!

Our God sets great value upon those whom He calls His jewels, as we may gather not only from their costly redemption, but from the fact that all providence is but a wheel upon which to polish and perfect them. Those stupendous wheels, which Ezekiel saw, were but a part of the machinery of the great Lapidary, by which He cuts the facets of His true brilliants, and makes His diamonds ready for His crown, for is it not written that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”? The Lord values His people very highly—not only the rich among them; not alone the most gracious among them—but the very least, and most unworthy among believers are Jehovah's jewels! To fear the Lord and think upon His name are very simple indications of piety, yet, if we only come up to the standard which these evidences indicate, we are dear to God. What though we may possess no singular

gifts or eminent graces. What though our voice may never be heard among the crowds of populous cities, yet still, if we “think upon His name,” and our hearts are set towards the Lord Jesus, we are precious to Him!

Jewels well portray the Christian, *because they are extremely hard and durable*. Most jewels will scratch glass. Some of them will cut it while they, themselves, will not be cut by the sharpest file. And many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acids. The Christian is such an one. He has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled, and destined to endure forever! In Pompeii and Herculaneum, diggers have discovered gems in an excellent state of preservation, while statuary and implements of iron have been destroyed. Jewels will last out the world's lifetime, and glitter on as long as the sun shines! Rust does not corrupt them, nor does the moth devour them, though the thief may break through and steal them. The Christian is born of an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. The world has often tried to crush or destroy God's diamonds, but all the attempts of malicious fury have failed. All that enmity has ever accomplished has only been, in the hands of God, the means of displaying the preciousness and brilliance of His jewels! The sham Christian, who is but a paste gem, soon yields to trial—he evaporates into a little noxious gas of self-conceit—and it is all over with him. A little heat of persecution, and the man-made Christian—where is he? But the genuine Christian, the true gem, the choice jewel of God will survive the fires of time, and when the last dissolving day shall arrive, he shall come forth from the furnace without a flaw!

The jewel is *prized for its luster*. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known, and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. Certainly there is no light like that which is reflected from the sincere Christian! The renewed heart catches the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and reflects them—not without some refraction, for we are mortal—but still, with much of glory, for we are immortal, and God dwells in us! Look how the diamond flashes and sparkles! It is of the first water when, with certain other conditions, it is also without cloudiness, and without spots. And oh, when a Christian is truly what a saint should be—what a luster, what a brilliance there is about him! He is like the Lord Jesus Christ, humble yet bold, teachable yet firm, gentle yet courageous! Like his Master, he goes about doing the will of Him that sent him. And though the wicked world may not love him, it cannot but perceive his brightness!

Look at Richard Baxter, in Kidderminster—what a flashing diamond he was! He had some spots, no doubt, but his brightness was most surprising! Even swearers on the ale-bench could not but know that He was a heaven-born spirit! We might quote honored names out of all Christian churches which would be at once discerned by you as God's flashing brilliants because there is about them so little of the cloudiness of nature—and so much of the brightness of grace that he must be blind, indeed, who does not admire them! Precious stones are the flowers of the mineral world, the blossoms of the mines, the roses and lilies of earth's caverns. Scarcely has the eye ever seen a more beautiful object than the breastplate of the high priest, studded with the 12 gems, each with its own separate ray melting into a harmony of splendor, and, albeit that the trickeries of pomp have but little influence over men of sober minds, I scarcely believe that there exists a single person who is altogether impervious to the influence of a crown set with ruby, pearl, emerald, and a bright array of other costly gems!

There is a beauty, a divine and superhuman beauty, about a Christian. He may be humbly clad and miserably housed. He may be poor, and his name may never be mentioned among the great. But jewelers value a rare stone, none the less, because of its ill-setting. Beloved, nothing so delights God, next to the person of His own dear Son, as the sight of one of those whom He has made like unto the Lord Jesus! Know you not that Christ's delights are with the sons of men, and that the holiness, the patience, the devotion, the zeal, the love, and the faith of His people are precious to Him? The whole creation affords no fairer sight to the Most High than an assembly of His sanctified people in whom He sees the beauty of His own character reflected! May you and I have much of “the beauty of holiness” given to us by the Holy Spirit! May the Lord look upon us with divine satisfaction because He sees in us the rays of the solar spectrum of His own ineffable perfection!

Christians are comparable to jewels *because of their rarity*. There are not many precious stones in the world. Of the smaller sorts, there may be many, but of the rarer gems, there are so few that

a little child might write them. Only six very large diamonds (called paragons) are known in the world, and God's people are but few compared with the unregenerate multitude who are as the pebbles in the brook! The Christian belongs, like the ruby, the diamond, and the emerald, to the choicest of created things! These stones are the aristocracy of minerals, and Christians are the aristocracy of men! They are God's nobles. The roll of Battle Abbey—have you ever looked it through? Well, it is of little consequence. There is a better roll by far—and if your name is written *there*, it will be of infinitely more consequence to you! In Doomsday Book—is there a name there at all like yours? Never mind whether there is or not. There is a Doom's-day Book which will be of more value in the day of doom than Doomsday Book has ever been among the sons of men! Not many wise men after the flesh, not many great and noble have their names inscribed there—but all who are written in heaven are, in another sense, wise, and great, and noble—for God has made them so through His own grace! Not many are the gems which enrich the nations and not many are the saints who shine among men. The way to heaven is narrow, and the Savior sorrowfully says, "Few there are that find it." There is a city where pearl, jasper, carbuncle, and emerald are as common things. O fair Jerusalem, when shall these eyes behold your turrets and your pinnacles?

It is worthy of observation, too, that *a jewel is the production of God*. Diamonds have been burned, and other jewels have been resolved into their elements. But, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian Knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade—they are the secret productions of God's own skill—and chemists fail to tell how they were produced, even though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, *but it cannot make one*. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the heaven-born life! And all the so-called "sacraments," vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian! "Yes," says one, "we take a little water, and we make an infant a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Sir, you make yourself a liar—and nothing better when you so speak—for it is neither in your power, nor in the power of any other man to regenerate a soul by any performance, either with or without water! You may never wash a flint long enough before you can wash it into a diamond. To make jewels for Christ's crown is God's work, and God's work alone! We might preach until our tongues grew dumb, and men's ears grew deaf, but not a living soul would ever receive divine grace by our talk alone—the Spirit must go with the Word of God, or it is so much wasted breath! The Lord alone can create a child of grace! And a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus where he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a believer, as it is to create a world!

It is worthy of remark, too, that *jewels are of many kinds*. Perhaps there is not a single ray in the spectrum which is not represented among them—from the purest white of the diamond, the red of the ruby, the bright green of the emerald, to the blue of the sapphire. So is it with God's people. They are not all alike, and they never will be! All attempts at uniformity must fail, and it is very proper that they should. We need not wish to be one in the sense of uniformity, but only in the sense of unity—not all one jewel, but many set in one crown. It little matters whether we shine with the sapphire's blue, or the emerald's green, or the ruby's red, or the diamond's white, so long as we are the Lord's in the day when He makes up His jewels!

Jewels are of all sizes, yet they are all jewels. One is a Koh-I-Noor, a very mountain of light, but it is not any more a diamond because it is large, though it is more precious. The smallest dust of the diamond that comes from the lapidary's wheel is made of the same material as the richest jewel that sparkles in the monarch's crown; and even so, those Christians who have but little faith and little grace, are still as much the divine workmanship as the brightest and most precious in the believing family! And what is more, they shall be in the casket when the others are there, for it is said of them all, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Once more, *jewels are found all over the world*. In the most frozen regions, on the tops of mountains, and in the depths of mines, jewels have been discovered, but they are said to be most numerous in tropical regions. So, Christians are to be found everywhere. Blessed be the name of God, the Eskimos have sung the praises of Immanuel in the regions of eternal ice! And the children of the sun have learned to adore the Sun of Righteousness in the midst of the torrid zone!

But in England, which is the tropical region of divine grace, the land where the gospel is preached in our streets, we find the most of believers, as also in a few other happy lands which, like our own fair island, lie upon the Equinoctial line of gospel privilege, where the grace of God has given the gospel in its greatest purity!

Wherever the jewels have been found, though they differ in some respects, yet *they are all alike in others. Kings delight in them, and are glad to use them as regal ornaments.* So, wherever the Lord finds His precious ones, East or West, or North or South, He sees something in them in which they all agree, and He delights in them! Our Lord Jesus counts them to be His true ornaments with which He arrays Himself as a bridegroom adorns himself with ornaments, and as a bride decks herself with jewels. God delights in Christians, come from whatever part they may. Although they may be of many tongues, and though the colors of their skins may vary, yet are they still very, very precious in His sight—and they shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels!

II. In the second place, let us consider THE MAKING UP OF THE JEWELS.

We have not come to the day of the making up of the jewels, for *some of them are at this hour hidden and undiscovered.* There is no doubt that many precious stones will yet be found. Diamond hunters are, at this moment, looking for them in the caverns of the earth, and washing the soil of the mines to find them. Many of the chosen of God are not yet manifested. The missionaries in heathen lands are toiling to discover them amid the mire of idolatry. My daily business and calling is that of a jewel hunter—and this pulpit is the place where I try to separate the precious from the vile. Sunday school teachers, and other workers are also diamond hunters. They deal with gems far more precious than millions of gold and silver. Oh, that all Christians were seekers of souls, for there is much need of all hands, and it is a work which well rewards the laborer! All the chosen are not yet saved. Blood-bought multitudes remain to be gathered in! Oh, for grace to seek them diligently! Because of the absence of so many of the Lord's gems, the "making up" of the jewels has not yet taken place—but the time for that is hastening on!

Many jewels are found, *but they are not yet polished.* They are precious gems, but it is only lately that they have been lifted up from the mine. When the diamond is first discovered, it glitters but little. You can see that it is a precious gem, but perhaps one half of it will have to be cut away before it sparkles with fullest splendor. The lapidary must torment it upon his wheel, and many hundreds of pounds must be spent before perfection is reached. In some cases, thousands of pounds have been expended before the diamond has been brought to its full excellence. So it will be with many of the Lord's people—they are *justified*, but they are not completely *sanctified*. Corruption has to be subdued, ignorance removed, unbelief cut away, worldliness taken off before they can be set in the crown of the great King! For this also the King waits, and His jewels are not "made up."

Many of the Lord's gems are but partly polished. Indeed, there are none on earth yet perfect. This is not the land of perfection! Some persons dream of it—their pretensions are but a dream! We have heard some say that they were perfect, but they were not perfect in the virtue of humility, or they would not have boasted after so vain-glorious a fashion! The saints are still in the Lapidary's hands. The Master is taking off first one angle, and then another, and rending away much which we have foolishly cherished—but through this cutting process we shall sparkle gloriously before long, so that those who knew us on earth will be amazed to see the difference in heaven! Perhaps it will be part of the joy of heaven to perceive our conquest over sin, to see how the divine hand has shed a glory and beauty upon the poor dull stones of earth!

The making up is delayed, too, because *certain of the gems which have been partly polished are missing.* "Oh," you say, "does the Lord ever lose any of His gems?" "No, not forever, but for a time they may be missing. A certain blue diamond that was very greatly renowned was, by some means, lost at the time of the French Revolution, and has never been heard of since. It is somewhere, however, and God knows where it is—and it is still a diamond. And so there are some of His people who go astray, and we cannot tell where they are. But still, "the Lord knows them that are His" and, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Backslider, you were once a jewel in the church—you were put down in the book as a church member, but from the casket of the church, Satan stole you! Ah, but you did not belong to him, and he cannot keep you! You have agreed to be his, but your agreement does not stand for anything. You did not belong to yourself, and so you could not give yourself away! Christ has the

first and only valid claim to you, and will yet obtain His rights by the omnipotence of His grace. Because of these missing jewels, the long-suffering of God waits. But the day is coming—its axles are hot with speed—when sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall glisten in the same crown with emerald, sapphire, and diamond, nor shall ligure, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, or jasper be lacking—they shall all be “set in gold in their enclosing.”

III. Upon THE HONORABLE PRIVILEGE of being numbered with the crown jewels of Jehovah, we will utter hardly more than a few sentences, and we will preface them with words of self-examination.

“They shall be Mine.” This does not include all men, but only “those that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Standing in the midst of this immense assembly, and remembering that a very large proportion of my hearers are professors of faith in Christ, I am happy to be in such a great jewel house! But when I reflect that it is a very easy thing, indeed, to imitate a jewel so that the counterfeit cannot be detected except by the most skillful jeweler, I feel solemnly impressed with the desire that none of you may be deceived! It is not very long ago that a lady possessed a sapphire supposed to be worth £10,000. Without informing her relatives, she sold it, and procured an imitation of it so cleverly fashioned that when she died, it was valued by a jeweler in order that the probate duty might be paid upon it—and the trustees of the estate actually paid probate duty upon it to our government on £10,000 for what was not really worth more than a few pence—for they imagined that it was the real sapphire! Now if in examining material jewels, men well skilled have been thus deceived, you will not wonder if, in connection with the jewels of mind and spirit, it is so difficult to detect an impostor! You may deceive the minister, the deacons, and the church—no, you may easily deceive *yourselves*, and even pay the probate duty! You may be making sacrifices, and discharging duties on account of true religion, as you think, but really for something which is not worth the name! Beloved in the Lord, be zealous for vital godliness! Hate hypocrisy, shun deception, and watch against formality! I will make a pause, and give you time, in a few minutes of silence, to pray that ancient and necessary prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” All paste gems and all the glass imitations will surely be detected in the day which will burn as an oven! May we be found among the Lord's genuine jewels in that dread testing day!

If we are the Lord's, then what privileges are ours! Then are we safe. If we really pass the scales at the last, there will be no more questioning, suspicions, beatings, weighing, or cutting. If the Great Valuer accepts us as being genuine, then we shall be secure forever!

Nor is this all, beloved. We shall also be *honored*. Remember where the jewels are to shine forever. Jesus Himself shall wear them as His glory and joy! Believers will be unrivalled illustrations of the glory of divine grace throughout all ages. Can you see our glorious Well-beloved? There He sits—adored of angels, and admired of men! But what are the ornaments He wears? Worlds were too small to be signets upon His fingers, and the zodiac too poor a thing to bind the sandals of His feet. But, oh, how bright He is, how glorious! And what are the jewels which display His beauty? They are souls redeemed by His death from going down into the pit! Blood-washed sinners! Men and women who, but for Him, would have been tormented forever in the flames, but who now rejoice to sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever!” So then—once acknowledged to be Christ's, you are not only safe, but you will be in the closest communion with Christ throughout eternity! It is a bliss, the thought of which may well flash with vehement flame through your hearts even now, that you are, one day, to display the glory of Immanuel; that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God! You are to be His “gold rings set with the beryl.” With you as His reward, His person will be “as bright as ivory overlaid with sapphires.” You are so dear to Him that He bought you with His own blood because you could not be “gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof.” Your redemption by His death proves that your soul could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire! And when the ever-glorious God shall exhibit your sanctified spirit as an illustration of His glorious character and work, no mention shall be made of

coral or of pearls, for your worth will be above rubies! The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal you, nor shall the precious crystal be compared to you!

But I hear a mournful voice crying, "All this is concerning the precious ones, but there is nothing for me! I was in hopes that there would have been something for a sinner like I am." Well, what are you, then? Are you not a jewel? "No," you cry, "I am not a jewel. I am only a common stone. I am not worth the picking up—I am just one of the many pebbles on the shore of life—and the tide of death will soon wash me into the great ocean of eternity! I am not worthy of God's thoughts. I am not even worth His treading upon—I shall, with multitudes of others, be swallowed up in the great deep of wrath, and never be heard of again!" Soul, did you never hear this text? "I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." What stones were they? They were ordinary loose stones in Jordan's bed. John was standing in the river baptizing, and pointing to those worthless pebbles not worth picking up. He said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Even so, this night, God is able of these stones around me in this vast throng to make gems which shall be His treasure in the day when He makes up His jewels! You cannot thus exalt yourselves, nor can I do it for you, but there is a secret and mysterious process by which, by divine art, the common stone is transmuted into the diamond! And though you are a stone black with sin, or blood-red with crime—though you are a flinty stone with jagged edges of blasphemy—though you are such a stone as Satan delights to throw at the truth of God, yet God can transform you into a jewel! He can do it in an instant! Do you know how He can do it? There is a wondrous rod with which He works matchless transformations. That rod is the cross! Jesus Christ suffered that sinners might not suffer! Jesus Christ died that sinners might not die, but that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Sinner though you are—if you come beneath the cross, and trustingly look up to God's dear Son, you shall be saved! And that salvation includes a complete change of nature by which you shall fear the Lord, think upon His name, and mingle with those who speak often, one to another, with the certainty of being the Lord's when He makes up His jewels!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MALACHI 3.

Malachi 3:1. *Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me.* The name Malachi means "my messenger." The reference here is, of course, to John the Baptist who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

1. *And the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple.* Now, the temple at Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, so how can the Jews still think the Lord, whom they profess to seek, will suddenly come to His temple? He must have come there already—so we know He did—for there is not one stone of the temple left standing upon another—"The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple"

1. *Even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the LORD of hosts.*

Christ was the great messenger of the covenant, the messenger of mercy. And the Lord's own people, even in that ancient time, delighted in anticipating the coming of the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed messenger of the Lord of hosts!

2. *But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.*

All that only looked like religion, but was not real and genuine, was purged away at His coming. He was like a refiner's fire, consuming the false pretensions of the Pharisees, and the vain boastings of the Scribes. There is, in the religion of Jesus Christ, a power that is a great purgative, and a great refiner!

3. *And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*

Christ comes suddenly, but He comes to stay. "He shall sit." If He comes into our heart at this moment—and He may come there suddenly—He will come to stay there, and He will sit there "as a refiner and purifier of silver."

3. *And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

Those men called to holy service shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness after He has cleansed and purified them. You cannot worship God rightly until you have been cleansed by Christ. Till then, you are like priests with defiled feet, unfit to come into the sanctuary of God. But when Christ has purified you, fail not to draw near to God, and to present your thanks offering to Him.

4, 5. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, says the Lord of hosts.

See how hard taskmasters are put, by divine inspiration, with sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers? They do not think badly of themselves, but the Lord thinks badly of them! And His judgment is always just.

6. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

This is their comfort—even the immutability of God is on the side of His people! He is just and always just! He hates sin, and always hates sin! Yet that unchangeableness of His is always on the side of the people of His choice!

7. Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of hosts.

You wanderers from God, take this invitation home to your hearts, and act upon it! Arise and return unto your Father, for when you are yet a great way off, He will see you, and will run to meet you, and have compassion upon you—“Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of hosts.”

7. But you said, Wherein shall we return?

God takes notice of what men say to Him after He has spoken to them. He will take notice of what you say when you go out of this house of prayer. Erring men usually have something to say for themselves. The self-righteous can always invent some excuse, or ask some question, as they did here—“Wherein shall we return?”

8. Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.

They were always ready to deny or question a just accusation, instead of letting it operate upon their conscience, so they asked about this charge.

8. But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings.

They had kept back from God's service the money which was necessary for the carrying on of the worship of His house. We read, in Nehemiah 13:10, that “the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled, everyone, to his field,” for they could not live at Jerusalem because “the portions of the Levites had not been given them”—their supply of provisions having been stopped through the meanness of the people who had thus robbed the Lord “in tithes and offerings.”

9. You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.

They could not make out why they were so poor, and why they could not get on! The real reason was that there was a curse resting upon all that they did because they had robbed God.

10. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

They had kept themselves poor by their own meanness! If they had behaved rightly towards God, He would have enriched them with the bounties of His providence. The very windows of heaven would have been thrown open to give them abundance for all their needs.

11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the LORD of hosts.

The locust and the caterpillar came up and ate their harvests—all because God was angry with them—and He alone could change their miserable circumstances.

12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the LORD of hosts.

God is able, simply with a turn of His hand, or a glance of His eyes, to enrich or to impoverish. He gives in a thousand ways that we cannot control, and He takes from us in as many ways which perhaps we cannot understand. It is always best to be right with God.

13-15. *Your words have been harsh against Me, says the LORD. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against You? You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are set up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered.*

Those were indeed bad old times when the mass of the people looked only to their own temporal comfort! When they saw the wicked become rich, they wished that they were wicked, too, in order that they might be rich. They thought that it was of no use to serve God! But happily there was another set of people in the land, as there always is, more or less. God never leaves Himself without witnesses—and when the wicked are proudest, God's people are often boldest.

16. *Then.*

At that very time—

16. *They that feared the LORD spoke often, one to another.*

They could not bear to hear their God thus spoken of, so they went to one another's houses. They found one another out, and talked to one another.

16. *And the Lord listened.*

He loves to listen to the holy talk of a holy people. "The Lord listened."

16. *And heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.*

That is a very precious expression. You cannot, perhaps, speak much for the Lord, yet you think the more about Him—and God remembers those who think upon His name. Yet, often, thinking leads to speaking, and there ought to be no speaking without previous thought! God loves to listen to the thoughtful conversation of a loving people who stand true to Him in the midst of an ungodly crowd—and He thinks very highly of them.

17. *And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.*

"Others, who thought much of themselves, shall be thrown away like worthless pebbles, but these faithful ones shall be Mine in that day when I am putting My jewels into My crown, for they shall be precious in My sight."

17. *And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.*

When the sword of the enemy is drawn from its sheath. When disease is putting down its myriads. When God's vengeance has laid hold upon the ungodly, He will be a hiding place for His people, and will care for them as a man would anxiously care, not only for his son, but for his only son, one who is obedient and faithful to his father—"his own son that serves him."

18. *Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.*

Not now, but *then*—by-and-by there shall be a distinguishing mark set upon all mankind! "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked."

18. *Between him that serves God and he that serves Him not.*

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

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