

GOD'S PROVIDENCE NO. 3114

A SERMON
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“Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Where they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.”
Ezekiel 1:15-19.

IN my preaching, I am constantly talking about providence, so I thought it would be well to devote a whole sermon to explaining what I believe are God's great wonder-working processes which we call, "providence." In looking for a suitable text, I found this one. These "wheels" signify divine providence and I trust, while explaining them, I may be so assisted by God's Spirit that I may say many things to you concerning God's government which may lift up any who are despondent and lift up the souls of many who are distressed.

I. Going at once to my divisions, my first remark will be that PROVIDENCE IS HERE COMPARED TO A "WHEEL."

When the prophet had "beheld the living creatures," which I take it were angels, he opened his eyes again and he saw a wonderful illustration of divine providence; and this exhibition was in the figure of a wheel. You must know that this is not the only place where this comparison is to be found, for the Romans and Greeks were accustomed to compare the wondrous working of God in providence to the revolutions of a wheel. The story goes that a certain king, being taken prisoner, was bound in chains and dragged along at the chariot wheels of his conqueror. As he went along, he kept looking at the wheel and shedding tears, and then looking at the wheel, again, and lifting up his eyes and smiling. The conqueror turned and said, "Why are you looking at that wheel?" He said, "I was thinking, such is the lot of man; just now I was here, now I am there; but soon I may be here again at the top of the wheel, and you may be grinding the dust." This was well for a heathen. The prophet had the very same idea; he was permitted by God to see that the wheel is a very beautiful figure of divine providence. Let me show you that it is so.

I have just hinted at one reason why providence is like a wheel; *because sometimes one part of the wheel is at the top and then it is at the bottom.* Sometimes this part is exalted and soon it sinks down to the dust. Then it is lifted into the air and then again, by a single revolution, it is brought down again to the earth. So is it with our life. Sometimes we are in humble poverty and hardly know what we shall do for bread. Soon the wheel revolves and we are brought into the comfort of wealth; our feet stand in a spacious room, we are fed with corn and wine; we drink of a cup overflowing its brim. Again we are brought low through affliction and famine. A little while and another page is turned; and we are exalted to the heavens and can sing and rejoice in the Lord our God! I have no doubt many of you here have experienced a far more checkered life than I have and, therefore, you can feel that your life has been as a "wheel." Ah, man! You are strong, great and rich! You may now stand at the uppermost part of it, but it is a wheel and you may yet be brought low. And you poor who are depressed and downcast; who are weeping because you know not where you shall lay your heads; that wheel may revolve and you may be lifted up! Our own experience is never a stale thing. It is always changing, always turning round. The fly that sits now on the edge of the wheel may be crushed by its next revolution. The world may cry,

“Hosanna,” to its minister, today, and the next day may say, “Crucify him, crucify him.” Such is the state of man. Providence is like a wheel!

You know that *in a wheel there is one portion that never turns round and that is the axle*. So, in God's providence, there is an axle which never moves. Christian, here is a sweet thought for you! Your state is always changing; sometimes you are exalted and sometimes depressed; yet there *is* a static point in your state. What is this axle? What is the pivot upon which all the machinery revolves? It is the axle of God's everlasting love towards His covenant people. The exterior of the wheel is changing, but the center stands forever fixed. Other things may move, but God's love never moves; it is the axle of the wheel! This is another reason why providence should be compared to a wheel.

Yet more. You observe *when the wheel moves very rapidly, you can discern nothing but the exterior circle*. So, if you look back to history and read the story of a thousand years, you see the wheel of providence revolving rapidly and you lose sight of all the little things that are within the circle. You see only one great thing and that is that God is working out in the world His everlasting purposes. You sit down and take a book of history; say the history of England; and you will say of one event, “Now that seems to be out of place.” You say of another, “That seems to be out of time.” Another, “That seems to be adverse to the cause of liberty.” But look through a thousand years and those things which seemed as if they would crush liberty in her germ; those things which seemed as if they would destroy this, our commonwealth, in our very rising, have been those which have caused the sturdy oak of liberty to take deeper root! Take the whole together, instead of taking the events one by one; look at a thousand years and you will see nothing but one round ring of symmetry teaching you that God is wise and God is just. So let it be with you in your lives. Here you are fretting about troubles today. Think also of the past; put all your troubles together and they are not troubles at all! You will see that one counteracts the other. If you take your life; not today, alone, but look back on 40 years of it; you will be obliged, instead of lamenting and mourning, to bless God for His mercies towards you. Let the wheel go round and you will see nothing but a ring of everlasting wisdom revolving!

I trust I have made the first part of my subject intelligible; that the providence of God is here compared to a wheel.

II. My second thought is that THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS, IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY, CONNECTED WITH ANGELS.

Look at verse 15. “Now as I beheld the living creatures.” Then turn to the 19th verse. “And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.” These living creatures I believe to be angels. And the text teaches us that there is a connection between providence and angelic agency. I do not know how to explain it. I cannot tell how it is, but I believe angels have a great deal to do with the affairs of this world. An angel cut off the hosts of Sennacherib and it is still my firm belief that angels are sent forth, somehow or other, to accomplish the everlasting purpose of God. The great wheel of providence is still turned by an angel. When there is some trouble which seems to stop that wheel, some mighty cherub puts his shoulder to it and hurls it round; and makes the chariot of God's providence go on still. Angels have much more to do with us than we imagine. I do not know but that spirits sometimes come down and whisper thoughts into our ears. I have strange thoughts, sometimes, that seem to come from a land of dreams; and fiery visions that make my soul hot within me. Sometimes I have thoughts which I know come from God's Spirit; some which are glorious and some that are not so good, but still holy thoughts; and I often attribute them to angels. I have sometimes a thought which cheers me in distress; and was not an angel sent to strengthen Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane? How do you think the angel strengthened Him? Why, by putting thoughts into Christ's mind! He could not do it in any other way; he could not strengthen Him by a plaster, or by any physical means, but by injecting holy thoughts! So is it with us. There was a temptation which might have led you astray, but God said, “Gabriel, fly! There is one of My people in peril; go and put such a thought into his soul that when the danger comes, he will say, ‘Get you behind me, Satan, I will have nothing to do with sin.’”

We have, each of us, a guardian angel to attend us. The meaning of the passage, “In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven,” surely is that every Christian has a guardian angel who flies about him and holds the shield of God over his brow, keeps his feet lest he

should dash them against a stone, guards him, controls him, manages him, injects thoughts into his mind, restrains his evil desires and is the minister and servant of the Holy Spirit to keep him from sin and lead him to righteousness. Whether I am right or wrong, I leave you to judge, but perhaps I have more angelology in me than most people have. I know my imagination has sometimes been so powerful that when I have been alone at night, I could almost fancy that I saw an angel fly by me when I have been out preaching the word. However, I take it that the text teaches us that angels have very much to do with God's providence, for it says, "And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up." Let us bless God that He has made angels ministering spirits to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation!

III. My third remark shall be that PROVIDENCE IS UNIVERSAL.

That you will see by the text. "Behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces." The wheel had "four faces." I think that means one face to the North, another to the South, another to the East and another to the West; there is a face to every quarter; teaching us that providence is universal, looking to every quarter of the globe. Have you ever been in a house where there was an old picture hanging? I have sometimes stood in a picture gallery and there has been a painting of some old warrior; and he has looked straight at me. If I have gone to the other end of the room, he has still looked at me. Wherever you are in the room, a well-painted portrait will be looking at you. Such is the providence of God; wherever you are, the eyes of God will be upon you; as much upon you as if there were not another person in the whole world! If there were only one, you may imagine how much God would look upon that one, but He looks on each one of us as if there were no other created being and nothing else in the whole world! His eyes are fixed upon us at every hour and at every moment. Wherever we may be, we shall have one face of the wheel turned upon us.

You cannot banish me from my Lord. Send me to the snows of Siberia or Lapland; I shall have the eyes of God there. Send me to Australia and let me toil at the gold diggings, there will He visit me. If you send me to the utmost verge of the round globe, I shall still have the eyes of God upon me. Put me in the desert where there is not one single blade of grass growing and His presence shall cheer me. Or let me go to sea, amidst the howls of the tempest and the shrieking of the wind where the mad waves lift up their hands to the skies as if they would pluck the stars from their cloudy thrones; and I shall have the eyes of God upon me there! Let me sink and let my gurgling voice be heard among the waves; let my body lie down in the caverns of the sea and the eyes of God shall be on every bone! And in the day of the resurrection shall my every atom be tracked in its wanderings! Yes, the eyes of God are everywhere; Providence is universal.

There may be some persons here who have friends far away; let me comfort them. The eyes of God are looking on them. There may be some here who are about to part with loved ones who are going to distant countries. Wherever they are, they will be as much in the keeping of God as though they were here. If one part of the world is not as near to the sun's light as another, yet they are all equally near the eyes of our God; transport me where you please, wherever the cloudy pillar of providence shall guide me; and I shall have God with me! That thought comforted the great traveler, Mungo Park, when he was in the desert of Sahara. He had been robbed and stripped of everything and was left naked. He suddenly saw a little piece of moss and, taking it up, he saw how beautiful it was. He said, "Then the hand of God is here, for here is one of His works! Though I call loudly, no man can hear me, for there is nothing but the prowling lion and the howling jackal; yet God is here." That thought comforted him and wherever you may be, whatever may be your case, God will be with you! Whatever period of your life you may now be in, God is with you! His eyes are at the bridal and at the funeral, at the cradle and at the grave. In the battle, God's eyes are looking through the smoke. In the rebellion, there are God's hands managing the masses of men who have broken loose from their rulers. In the earthquake, there is Jehovah manifest. In the tempest, there are God's hands tossing the boat, dashing it against the rocks, or saving it from the boisterous waves. In all seasons, at all times, in all dangers and in all climes, there are the hands of God!

IV. My next remark is that PROVIDENCE IS UNIFORM.

It is only one providence and always one. "Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel was on the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their

work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness.” There were four wheels and four faces, yet one likeness. There was but one piece of machinery and thus we are taught that providence is all one. Sometimes providences seem to cross each other. One thing that God does seems to contradict another thing that He does; but it never really does so.

It is a great truth of God, though hard for us to grasp, that providence is one. Just look at the case of Joseph. God has it in His mind that Joseph shall be governor over all the land of Egypt. How is that to be accomplished? The first thing to be done is that Joseph's brothers must hate him. “Oh,” you say, “that is a step backward.” Next, Joseph's brothers must put him in the pit. “That is another step backward,” you say. No, it is not. Wait a little while. Joseph's brothers must sell him; that is another step backward, is it not? Oh, no! Providence is one and you must not look at its separate parts. He is sold; he becomes a favorite. So far, so good; that is a step onward! Soon he is put in a dungeon. Wait and see the end; all the different parts of the machinery are one. They appear to clash, but they never do. Put them all together. If Joseph had not been put in the pit, he never would have been the servant of Potiphar. If he had never been put in the prison, he would never have interpreted his fellow prisoners' dreams. And if the king had never dreamed, he would not have been called to go to the palace. There were a thousand “chances,” as the world has it, working together to produce the exaltation of Joseph! Providence is one; it never clashes.

“Oh,” says one, “I cannot understand that. Providence seems to be very adverse to me.” I think it is Mrs. Hannah More who says that she went into a place where they were manufacturing a carpet. She said, “There is no beauty there.” The man said, “It is one of the most beautiful carpets you ever saw.” “Why, here is a piece hanging out and it is all in disorder.” “Do you know why, Ma'am? You are looking at the wrong side of the carpet.” So it is very often with us. You and I think providence is adverse to us because we are looking at the wrong side! We look at the wrong side while we are here, but when we get to heaven, we shall see the right side of God's dealings; and when we do, we shall say, “O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all.” You have sometimes been puzzled to think why that friend was brought into the grave, or you have said, “Why was I made sick at such and such a time? Why did that trouble and that calamity fall upon me?” That is no business of yours; you are to believe that all things work together for one great purpose and that one thing never crosses another! But you must not expect to see it so just yet. Here, on earth, the machine appears broken to pieces and we can only see it in confusion. But in heaven we shall see it all put together. Suppose I go into a place where some great engineer is manufacturing a machine and say to him, “Do you mean to tell me that *this* is a machine?” “Yes and an exquisite one it will be.” “It does not look like it. I could not put it together.” “Oh, no, sir, you could not, but I can! Come and see it when I have put it together, and you shall see that each part fits into its proper place; that each cog on the wheel will work on the cog of another wheel, and all the spokes will move together when I adjust them. Do not find fault with it and say, ‘One is too small, and another too large,’ because you know nothing at all about it.” So, dear friends, you and I can never see more than parts of God's ways. We only see here a wheel, and there a wheel; we must wait till we get to heaven; then we shall see the right side of the carpet and then we shall see that it was one piece of machinery, with one end, one aim and one objective!

V. My next thought is that, in this text PROVIDENCE IS COMPARED TO THE SEA.

Look at the 16th verse. “The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl.” The word “beryl” is commonly used in Scripture to denote the ocean, because the beryl bears the greatest likeness to that deep green you sometimes see in the ocean and, at other times the blue appearance of the sea. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to the top of some high cliff and look down on the noisy ocean. It has been the theme of a thousand songs. It has borne myriads of fleets on its mighty breast yet there it is, still rolling on! If you begin to think about the ocean, though it is one of the minor parts of God's works compared with the constellations in the heavens, and the globes which He has hung on high, you begin to be lost in the vastness of your conceptions concerning the greatness of God's works. And so it is with providence!

It is like the ocean for another reason. *The sea is never still*; both day and night it is always moving. In the day, when the sun shines upon it, its waves march up in marshaled order as if about to capture the whole land and drown all the solid earth. Then again they march back as if each one is reluctant to yield

up its prey. It is always moving; the moon shines upon it and the stars light it up; still it moves. Or darkness falls so that nothing can be seen; still it moves. By night and day the restless billows chant a boisterous hymn of glory, or murmur the solemn dirge of mariners wrecked far out in the depths. Such is providence; by night and by day providence is always going on. The farmer sleeps, but his wheat is growing. The mariner on the sea sleeps, but the wind and the waves are carrying on his boat. Providence, you never stop! Your mighty wheels never stay their everlasting circles! As the blue ocean has rolled on impetuously for ages, so shall providence roll on until He who first set it in motion, shall bid it stop; and then its wheel shall cease, forever fixed by the eternal decree of the Almighty God!

Again, you will see another reason why the sea is like providence. *Man cannot manage it.* Who can rule or govern the sea? Men cannot. Xerxes made chains for the Hellespont and lashed the sea with whips because it washed away his boats, but what cared the sea about that? It laughed at him and if he had not been too great a coward to put himself on its bosom, it might have swallowed him. Canute put his chair on the beach and bade the waves retire. What cared they for him? They came and would have washed him and his chair away if he had not moved backward. The sea is not to be governed by man! A whole fleet sails over it and it is only like a feather blown by the wind across the surface of a brook! All we ever put on the sea is as nothing. It can never be restrained, nor chained, nor managed by man. Greedy man has carved the land, but the sea has no landmark. It is impetuous! It follows its own will. So does providence. It will not be managed by man. Napoleon once heard it said that man proposes and God disposes. "Ah," said Napoleon, "but I propose and dispose, too." How do you think he proposed and disposed? He proposed to go and take Russia. He proposed to destroy that power; but how did he come back again? He came back solitary and alone, his mighty army perished and wasted, having well-near eaten and devoured one another through hunger! Man proposes and God disposes. Providence, like the sea, cannot be directed by man; it can only be controlled by God. Let man try to stand against God's providence and providence will grind and crush him!

VI. Again, GOD'S PROVIDENCE IS INTRICATE.

That you will also find in the text; "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel." I have just said that providence is *intricate*. When Joseph brought his two sons up to Jacob's deathbed and Jacob was about to bless them, Jacob guided his hands wittingly; and he put his right hand on the head of the younger son, and his left hand on the head of the elder one. Joseph said, "Not so, my Father, for this is the firstborn." And Jacob said, "I know it, my son, I know it"; and he would not give the blessing in any other way but with his hands crossed; and God usually blesses His children by crossing His hands. We say, "Do not deal so with me," but God says, "It must be even so, My child. There is a blessing on your head. Do not say, 'Uncross Your hands,' for that is the way to bless you most of all. I wish to put the greatest blessing upon you and, therefore, I have crossed My hands." Providence is wonderfully intricate! You want always to see through providence, do you not? You never will, I can assure you! You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you? You must believe it! You want to see how it can bring good to the soul? You may be enabled to do so in a little time, but you cannot see it now; you must believe it! Honor God by trusting Him! God has many Gordian knots which wicked men may cut and which righteous men may try to unravel, but which God alone can untie! We see the wicked prosper. They flourish and great is their power, while the righteous are cast down. We say, "Why is this?" There are wheels within wheels. Do not fret yourselves because evil-doers are more prosperous than the godly. There may be a nation that seems to have right on its side; that nation may be crushed and another nation, which is tyrannical, may get the victory. Do not ask, "Why is this?" You shall know the reason when you get up yonder! Do not attempt to do what Gabriel never dares to do; to ask the reason why, for God will never give it.

VII. Next, PROVIDENCE IS ALWAYS CORRECT.

I shall not detain you long on this point. The prophet saw the wheels and he well said, "they turned not when they went." They always went straight; they never turned to the right or to the left. Such is God's providence. Man marks out plans. He says, "I shall build this tower." He gets it half up and he finds he has not enough to finish it with; he has to pull it down, lay a smaller foundation, and build

again. God never does so; He has a plan when He begins and He carries that plan out. He lays the foundation and He also lays the tombstone. There are some persons who talk about God changing His purpose; such people do not know what God is at all. How could God change!? God must either change from a better to a worse, or from a worse to a better. If He could change from a worse to a better, He is not perfect now. And if He could change from what He is to something worse, He would not be perfect then; and He would not be God! He cannot change. It is not possible that God should ever change or shift in any of His purposes. Can He change because He has not power? Why, sirs, He could girdle this globe with mountains, or move the hills into the sea! Can He change because He has not patience enough? What? He who from His purpose never swerves? Shall He change because He has made a mistake? Shall the Most High Jehovah ever harbor an error in His Almighty mind? "To err is human." With the divine being, the whole plan goes on to completion and what He has ordained shall be! On the iron rock of destiny it is written and it cannot be altered. God moves the wheel and the wheel goes on; and though a thousand armies stand in the way to stop it, it still goes on. "They turned not when they went."

I cannot make out what some of you do with your comfortless gospel; believing that God loves you today, and hates you tomorrow; that you are a child of God one day, and a child of the devil the next. I could not believe a gospel like that! If I were a heathen, I could believe it at once because I could manufacture a god of mud that I could alter with my fingers, and change to any fashion. But if I once believe in the God who "Was and Is, and is to come," I know that He cannot change and I feel a constancy of faith and a firmness of hope which the cares and trials of this mortal life cannot destroy. He will not cast off His people whom He has chosen.

VIII. Another thought is, that PROVIDENCE IS AMAZING.

I shall not dwell on this point, but just remind you that the text says it is so. "As for their rims, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four." Even the man who knows that every wave that dashes against the ship is washing him nearer home; that every breath of wind that rises comes to his sail and fills it and sends it to the white cliffs of his native Albion; even the man who feels that everything is working for him; even *he* must say that providence is amazing! Oh, that thought; it staggers thought! It is an idea that overwhelms me; that God is working in all that happens! The sins of man, the wickedness of our race, the crimes of nations, the iniquities of kings, the cruelties of wars, the terrific scourge of pestilence; all these things are, in some mysterious way, working the will of God! I cannot explain this. I cannot tell you where human will and free agency unite with God's sovereignty and with His unfailing decrees. This has been the place where intellectual gladiators have fought with each other since the time of Adam. Some have said, "Man does as he likes" and others have said, "God does as He pleases." In one sense they are both true, but there is no man who has brains or understanding enough to show where they meet. We cannot tell how it is that I do just as I please as to which street I shall go home by and yet I cannot go home except through a certain road. John Newton used to say that there were two streets by which he could go to St. Mary Woolnoth; but providence directed him as to which he should use. Last Sabbath I came down a certain street; I do not know why; and there was a young man who wished to speak to me. I say that was God's providence that I might meet that young man. Here was providence, and yet there was my choice; how, I cannot tell. I cannot comprehend it. I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes; that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens; that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses; that the chirping of an aphid over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence, and the fall of sere leaves from the poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He who believes in God must believe this truth of His. There is no standing point between this and atheism. There is no half way between an almighty God who works all things according to the good pleasure of His own will and no god at all. A god who cannot do as He pleases; a god whose will is frustrated; is not a God and cannot be a God! I could not believe in such a god as that.

IX. My closing idea is that PROVIDENCE IS FULL OF WISDOM.

You will see this by the last part of the 18th verse. "And their rims were full of eyes round about them four." You will say, this morning, "Our minister is a fatalist." Your minister is no such thing!

Some will say, "Ah, he believes in fate." He does not believe in fate at all! What is fate? Fate is this; *whatever is, must be*. But there is a difference between that and providence. Providence says, *Whatever God ordains, must be*. But the wisdom of God never ordains anything without a purpose. Everything in this world is working for some one great end. Fate does not say that. Fate simply says that the thing must be. Providence says that God moves the wheels along and there they are. If anything would go wrong, God puts it right and if there is anything that would move awry, He puts forth His hand and alters it. It comes to the same thing; but there is a difference as to the objective. There is all the difference between fate and providence that there is between a man with good eyes and a blind man. Fate is a blind thing; it is the avalanche crushing the villages down below the mountain and destroying thousands of lives. Providence is not an avalanche, it is a rolling river, rippling at the first like a stream down the sides of the mountain, followed by minor streams, and then it rolls in the broad ocean of everlasting love, working for the good of the human race. The doctrine of providence is not that *what is must be*; but that, what is, works together for the good of our race and especially for the good of the chosen people of God. The wheels were full of eyes; they were not blind wheels!

Let us close with the thought that there is the greatest wisdom in the workings of providence. You were recently in great distress and you could not see why it was so with you. The next time you are in distress, you must say, "The wheels of providence are full of eyes; I have but two eyes, but God's wheels are full of eyes. God can see everything. I can only see one thing at a time. I see it looks good for me now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I see what the plant is now. I do not know what it will be tomorrow. I know not what kind of flower that herb will yield. This affliction is a cassava root, full of poison and would soon destroy me, but God can put that in the oven so that all the poison shall evaporate and it shall become food for me to live upon. This trouble of mine seems to me to be destructive, but God can take all the destroying power out of it and so it shall be made into food for my soul." Now, you tried one, groaning down in the valley, up with your heart! Away with your tears! Put your hand on your breast and make your heart stop its hard beating. Poor soul, dash the cup of misery from your hand; you are not condemned; you are a pardoned Christian! Remember that God has said, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Oh, how I would like to make your hearts like flint and steel against trouble! We cannot bear the winds of trouble; we are soon cast down and brokenhearted. When we are in prosperity, we are giants; we think we can do like Samson did; that we can take hold of the two pillars of trouble and distress and pull them down! But once tell us that the Philistines are upon us and we have no power.

He who has faith is better than the stoic. The stoical philosopher bore trial because he believed it must be. The Christian bears it because he believes it is working for his good. The next time that trouble comes, or disease comes, or pestilence comes, smile at it and say—

*"He that has made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode,
Shall walk all day beneath His shade
And there at night shall rest his head."*

Let this be your shield to keep off the thrusts of distress and this be your high rock against all the winds of sorrow! Amen.

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.* [See Sermons #1077, Volume 18; THE LORD BLESSING HIS SAINTS; #1078, Volume 18; THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD and #2121, Volume 36; THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR; Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Come, my heart, be down in the dumps no longer! Take your harp from the willows, tune its strings and begin to pour forth its music to the praise of divine love!

2-4. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* This is a better crown than any emperor ever wore, unless he, also, was a
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Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.

child of God. Priceless and rare gems and jewels adorn this wondrous coronet; “who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

5-9. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide.* [See Sermon #1171, Volume 20; THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE; Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Are you suffering His chiding just now? They are good for you, but they will not last forever. “He will not always chide.”

9, 10. *Neither will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins.* It is all of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. “He has not dealt with us after our sins.”

10-12. *Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* [See Sermon #1108, Volume 19; PLENARY ABSOLUTION; Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Then surely He will also remove our troubles from us! But if not, as He has removed our transgressions so far away that they can never be brought back again, we have real cause for joy whatever happens to us here.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him.* [See Sermons #941, Volume 16; THE TENDER PITY OF THE LORD; #1650, Volume 28; GOD'S FATHERLY PITY and #2639, Volume 45; OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S PITY; Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The very best of them are only objects of pity. Though they are the best, they need that He should look down upon them with infinite compassion.

14-19. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. 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. 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. The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all.* What a comfort this is for us! Over the great as well as over the little, over all parts of the earth, as well where war rages as where peace reigns, “His kingdom rules over all.” Nothing happens without His permission! Even the little things of life are ordered by Him! The foreknown station of a rush by the riverside is as fixed as the place of a king; and the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as surely as the stars in their courses, for to God nothing is little and nothing is great.

20, 21. *Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.* Let all the armies of heaven break forth into one song; “Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts.”

21, 22. *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.*

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