

THE WELL-BELOVED'S VINEYARD

NO. 3319

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1912
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
TO A COMPANY OF BELIEVERS, AT MENTONE

“My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.”
Isaiah 5:1

WE recognize at once that Jesus is here. Who but He can be meant by “My Wellbeloved”? Here is a word of possession and a word of affection—He is mine, and my Well-beloved. He is loveliness itself, the most loving and lovable of beings, and we personally love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength: He is ours, our Beloved, our Well-beloved, we can say no less.

The delightful relationship of our Lord to us is accompanied by words which remind us of our relationship to Him, “My Wellbeloved hath a vineyard,” and what vineyard is that but our heart, our nature, our life? We are His, and we are His for the same reason that any other vineyard belongs to its owner. He made us a vineyard. Thorns and briars were all our growth naturally, but He bought us with a price, He hedged us about, and set us apart for Himself, and then He planted and cultivated us.

All within us that can bring forth good fruit is of His creating, His tending, and His preserving, so that if we be vineyards at all we must be *His* vineyards. We gladly agree that it shall be so. I pray that I may not have a hair on my head that does not belong to Christ, and you all pray that your every pulse and breath may be the Lord's.

This happy afternoon I want you to note that this vineyard is said to be upon “a very fruitful hill.” I have been thinking of the advantages of my own position towards the Lord, and lamenting with great shamefacedness that I am not bringing forth such fruit to Him as my position demands. Considering our privileges, advantages, and opportunities, I fear that many of us have need to feel great searchings of heart. Perhaps to such the text may be helpful, and it will not be without profit to any one of us, if the Lord will bless our meditation upon it.

I. Our first thought, in considering these words, is that **OUR POSITION AS THE LORD'S VINEYARD IS A VERY FAVOURABLE ONE**, “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.”

No people could be better placed for serving Christ than we are. I hardly think that any man is better situated for glorifying God than I am. I do not think that any women could be in better positions for serving Christ than some of you dear sisters, now occupy. Our heavenly Father has placed us just where He can do the most for us, and where we can do the most for Him. Infinite wisdom has occupied itself with carefully selecting the soil, and site, and aspect of every tree in the vineyard. We differ greatly, and need differing situations in order to fruitfulness, the place which would suit one might be too trying for another.

Friend, the Lord has planted you in the right spot, your station may not be the best in itself, but it is the best for you. We are in the best possible position for some present service at this moment, the providence of God has put us on a vantage ground for our immediate duty, “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.”

Let us think *of the times in which we live* as calling upon us to be very fruitful when we compare them with the years gone by. Time was when we could not have met thus happily in our own room, if we had been taken in the act of breaking bread, or reading God's Word, we should have been hauled off to prison, and perhaps pent to death. Our forefathers scarcely dared to lift up their voices in a psalm of

praise, lest the enemy should be upon them. Truly, the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, yea, we have a goodly heritage, in a very fruitful hill.

We do not even live in times when error is so rampant as to be paramount. There is too much of it abroad, but taking a broad view of things, I venture to say that there never was a time when the truth had a wider sway that it has now, or when the Gospel was more fully preached, or when there was more spiritual activity. Black clouds of error hover over us, but at the same time we rejoice that, from John o' Groat's House to the Land's End, Christ is preached by ten thousand voices, and even in the dark parts of the earth the name of Jesus is shining like a candle in the house. If we had the pick of the ages in which to live, we could not have selected a better time for fruit bearing than that which is now occurrent, this age is "a very fruitful hill."

That this is the case some of us know positively, *because we have been fruitful*. Look back, brothers and sisters, upon times when your hearts were warm, and your zeal was fervent, and you served the Lord with gladness. I join with you in those happy memories. Then we could run with the swiftest, we could fight with the bravest, we could work with the strongest, we could suffer with the most patient. The grace of God has been upon certain of us in such an unmistakable manner that we have brought forth all the fruits of the Spirit.

Perhaps today we look back with deep regret because we are not so fruitful as we once were, if it be so, it is well that our regrets should multiply, but we must change each one of them into a hopeful prayer. Remember, the vine may have changed, but the soil is the same. We have still the same motives for being fruitful, and even more than we used to have. Why are we not more useful? Has some spiritual phylloxera taken possession of the vines, or have we become frostbitten, or sunburnt? What is it that withholds the vintage! Certainly, if we were fruitful once, we ought to be more fruitful now. The fruitful hill is not exhausted, what aileth us that our grapes are so few?

We are planted on a fruitful hill, *for we are called to work which of all others is the most fruitful*. Blessed and happy is the man who is called to the Christian ministry, for this service has brought more glory to Christ than any other. You, beloved friends, are not called to be rulers of nations, nor inventors of engines, nor teachers of sciences, nor slayers of men, but we are soul-winners, our work is to lead men to Jesus. Ours is, of all the employment in the world, the most fruitful in benefits to men and glory to God. If we are not serving God in the Gospel of His Son with all our might and ability, then we have a heavy responsibility resting upon us. "Our Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," there is not a richer bit of soil outside Immanuel's land than the holy ministry for souls.

Certain of us are teachers and gather the young about us while we speak of Jesus. This also is choice soil. Many teachers have gathered a grand vintage from among the little ones, and have not been a whit behind pastors and evangelists in the glory of soul-winning. Dear teachers, your vines are planted in a very fruitful hill. But I do not confine myself to preachers and teachers, for all of us, as we have opportunities of speaking for the Lord Jesus Christ, and privately talking to individuals, have also a fertile soil in which to grow. If we do not glorify God by soul-winning, we shall be greatly blamable, since of all forms of service it is most prolific in praise of God.

And what is more, the very circumstances with which we are surrounded all tend to make our position exceedingly favorable for fruit-bearing. In this little company we have not one friend who is extremely poor, but if such were among us, I should say the same thing. Christ has gathered some of His choicest clusters from the valley of poverty. Many eminent saints have never owned a foot of land, but lived upon their weekly wage, and found scant fare at that. Yes, by the grace of God, the vale of poverty has blossomed as the rose.

It so happens, however, that the most of us here have a competence, we have all that we need, and something over to give to the poor and to the cause of God. Surely we ought to be fruitful in almsgiving, in caring for the sick, and in all manner of sweet and fragrant influences. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," is a prayer that has been answered for most of us, and if we do not now give honor unto God, what excuse can we make for our barrenness? I am speaking to some who are singularly healthy, who

are never hindered by aches and pains, and to others who have been prospered in business for twenty years at a stretch, yours is great indebtedness to your Lord, in your case “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.” Give God your health and your wealth, my brother, while they last, see that all His care of thee is not thrown away.

Others of us seldom know many months together of health, but have often had to suffer sorely in body, this ought to make us fruitful, for there is much increase from the tillage of affliction. Has not the Master obtained the richest of all fruit from bleeding vines? Do not His heaviest bunches come from those which have been sharply cut and pruned down to the ground? Choice flavors, dainty juices, and delicious aromas come mostly from the use of the keen-edged knife of trial.

Some of us are at our best for fruit-bearing when in other respects we are at our worst. Thus I might truly say that, whatever our circumstances may be, whether we are poor or rich, in health or in affliction, each one of our cases has its advantages, and we are planted “in a very fruitful hill.”

Furthermore, when I look at *our spiritual condition*, I must say for myself, and I think for you also, “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.” For what has God done for us? To change the question—what has God *not* done for us? What more could He say than to us He hath said? What more could He do than to us He hath done?

He hath dealt with us like a God. He has loved us up from the pit of corruption, He has loved us up to the cross, and up to the gates of heaven, He has quickened us, forgiven us, and renewed us, He dwells in us, comforts us, instructs us, upholds us, preserves us, guides us, leads us, and He will surely perfect us. If we are not fruitful, to His praise, how shall we excuse ourselves? Where shall we hide our guilty heads? Shall yonder sea suffice to lend us briny tears wherewith to weep over our ingratitude?

II. I go a step further, by your leave, and say that OUR POSITION, as the Lord's vineyard, IS FAVORABLE TO THE PRODUCTION OF THE FRUIT WHICH HE LOVES BEST.

I believe that my own position is the most favorable for the production of the fruit that the Lord loves best in me, and that your position is the same. What is this fruit?

First, it is *faith*. Our Lord is very delighted to see faith in His people. The trust which clings to Him with childlike confidence is pleasant to His loving heart. Our position is such that faith ought to be the easiest thing in the world to us. Look at the promises He has given us in His word, can we not believe them? Look at what the Father has done for us in the gift of His dear Son, can we not trust Him after that? Our daily experience all goes to strengthen our confidence in God. Every mercy asks, “Will you not trust Him?” Every want that is supplied cries, “Can you not trust Him?”

Every sorrow sent by the great Father tests our faith, and drives us to Him on whom we repose, and so strengthens and confirms our confidence in God. Mercies and miseries alike operate for the growth of faith. Some of us have been called upon to trust God on a large scale, and that necessity has been a great help towards fruit-bearing. The more troubles we have, the more is our vine digged about, and the more nourishment is laid to its roots. If faith does not ripen under trial, when will it ripen? Our afflictions fertilize the soil wherein faith may grow.

Another choice fruit is *love*. Jesus delights in love. His tender heart delights to see its love returned. Am I not of all men most bound to love the Lord? I speak for each brother and sister here, is not that your language? Do you not all say, “Lives there a person beneath yon blue sky who ought to love Jesus more than I should do?” Each sister soliloquizes, “Sat there ever a woman in her chamber who had more reason for loving God than I have?” No, the sin which has been forgiven us should make us love our Savior exceeding much. The sin which has been prevented in other cases should make us love our Preserver much. The help which God has sent us in hours of need, the guidance which He has given in times of difficulty, the joy which He has poured into us in days of fellowship, and the quiet He has breathed upon us in seasons of trial—all ought to make us love Him.

Along our life-road, reasons for loving God are more numerous than the leaves upon the olives. He has hedged us about with His goodness, even as the mountains and the sea are round our present resting-place. Look backward as far as time endures, and then look far beyond that, into the eternity which has

been, and you will see the Lord's great love set upon us, all through time and eternity reasons have been accumulating which constrain us to love our Lord. Now turn sharply round, and gaze before you, and all along the future faith can see reasons for loving God, golden milestones on the way that is yet to be traversed, all calling for our loving delight in God.

Christ is also very pleased with the fruit of *hope*, and we are so circumstanced that we ought to produce much of it. The aged ought to look forward, for they cannot expect to see much more on earth. Time is short, and eternity is near, how precious is a good hope through grace! We who are not yet old ought to be exceedingly hopeful, and the younger folk, who are just beginning the spiritual life, should abound in hope most fresh and bright. If any man has expectations greater than I have, I should like to see him. We have the greatest of expectations. Have you never felt like Mercy in her dream, when she laughed, and when Christiana asked her what made her laugh, she said that she had had a vision of things yet to be revealed?

Select any fruit of the Spirit you choose, and I maintain that we are favorably circumstanced for producing it, we are planted upon a very fruitful hill. What a fruitful hill we are living in as regards *labor for Christ!* Each one of us may find work for the Master, there are capital opportunities around us. There never was an age in which a man, consecrated to God, might do so much as he can at this time. There is nothing to restrain the most ardent zeal. We live in such happy times that, if we plunge into a sea of work, we may swim, and none can hinder us.

Then, too, our labor, is made, by God's grace, to be so pleasant to us. No true servant of Christ is weary *of* the work, though He may be weary *in* the work, it is not the work that he ever wearies of, for he wishes that he could do ten times more. Then our Lord makes our work to be successful. We bring one soul to Jesus, and that one brings a hundred. Sometimes, when we are fishing for Jesus, there may be few fish, but blessed be His name, most of them enter the net, and we have to live praising and blessing God for all the favour with which He regards our labor of love. I do think I am right in saying that, for the bearing of the fruit which Jesus loves best, our position is exceedingly favorable.

III. And now, this afternoon, at this table, OUR POSITION HERE IS FAVOURABLE EVEN NOW TO OUR PRODUCING IMMEDIATELY, and upon the spot, the richest, ripest, rarest fruit for our Well-beloved.

Here, at the communion table, we are at the center of the truth, and at the wellhead of consolation. Now we enter the holy of holies, and come to the most sacred meeting place between our souls and God.

Viewed from this table, *the vineyard slopes to the south*, for everything looks towards Christ, our Sun. This bread, this wine, all set our souls aslope towards Jesus Christ, and He shines full upon our hearts, and minds, and souls, to, make us bring forth much fruit. Are we not planted on a very fruitful hill?

As we think of His passion for our sake, we feel that *a wall is set about us to the north*, to keep back every sharp blast that might destroy the tender grapes. No wrath is dreaded now, for Jesus has borne it for us, behold the tokens of His all-sufficient sacrifice! No anger of the Lord shall come to our restful spirits, for the Lord saith, "I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Here, on this table, are the pledges of His love unspeakable, and these, like a high wall, keep out the rough winds. Surely, we are planted on a very fruitful hill.

Moreover, *the Well-beloved Himself is among us*. He has not let us out to husbandmen, but He Himself doth undertake to care for us, and that He is here we are sure, for here is His flesh, and here is His blood. You see the outward tokens, may you feel the unseen reality, for we believe in His real presence, though not in the gross corporeal sense with which worldly spirits blind themselves. The King has come into a garden, let us entertain Him with our fruits. He who for this vineyard poured out a bloody sweat, is now surveying the vines, shall they not at this instant give forth a goodly smell? The presence of our Lord makes this assembly a very fruitful hill, where He sets His feet, all good things flourish.

Around this table, *we are in a place where others have fruited well*. Our literature contains no words more precious than those which have been spoken at the time of communion. Perhaps you know and appreciate the discourses of Willison, delivered on sacramental occasions. Rutherford's communion sermons have a sacred unction upon them. The poems of George Herbert, I should think, were most of them inspired by the sight of Christ in this ordinance. Think of the canticles of holy Bernard, how they flame with devotion. Saints and martyrs have been nourished at this table of blessing. This hallowed ordinance, I am sure, is a spot where hopes grow bright, and hearts grow warm, resolves become firm, and lives become fruitful, and all the clusters of our soul's fruit ripen for the Lord.

Blessed be God, *we are where we have ourselves often grown*. We have enjoyed our best times when celebrating this sacred Eucharist. God grant it may be so again! Let us, in calm meditation and inward thought, now produce from our hearts sweet fruits of love, and zeal, and hope, and patience, let us yield great clusters like those of Eshcol, all for Jesus, and for Jesus only. Even now, let us give ourselves up to meditation, gratitude, adoration, communion, rapture, and let us spend the rest of our lives in glorifying and magnifying the ever-blessed name of our Well-beloved whose vineyard we are.

*“While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and souls employs,
Here we could sit, and gaze away
A long, an everlasting day.*

*“Well, we shall quickly pass the night,
To the fair coasts of perfect light;
Then shall our joyful senses rove
O'er the dear object of our love.*

*“There shall we drink full draughts of bliss,
And pluck new life from heavenly trees;
Yet now and then, dear Lord, bestow
A drop of heaven on us below.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 5:1-19, PSALM 121:1-7

Isaiah Chapter 5. Verse 1. *Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:*

The Song of the Vineyard is by no means a joyful song. It is, indeed, quite the reverse. It is pitched in the minor key and has a painful theme. This suffices to prove that all our hymns need not consist, as some affirm, of direct praise to God. Such a notion is not according to Scripture, for many of the Psalms are not of that character.

There are songs that can be sung to the edification of one another, and that is, in part, the design of sacred song. We speak to ourselves, as well as to God, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. “My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.” The members of the church of God are placed in a position where they have very choice opportunities of glorifying God, they are like a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, most favorably placed for fruitfulness.

2. *And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

The vineyard was well chosen as to situation, the vine was carefully selected. Everything was done, by walling it, to protect it from intruders. Every preparation was made for the gathering in of the fruits.

The winepress was there, yet when the time came for grapes sweet and luscious, it brought forth wild grapes. You know what that means. Has it been so with us? Have we rewarded the Well-beloved thus ungratefully for all His pains? Have we given Him hardness of heart, instead of repentance; unbelief, instead of faith; indifference, instead of love; idleness, instead of holy industry; impurity, instead of holiness? Is that my case? Is it your case, dear friends? Has even our religion been a false thing? Has it been like wild grapes or poisonous berries? Have we been at times right only by accident, and have we never carefully and sedulously sought to serve our Lord, or to bring forth fruit to His praise? O Lord, thou knowest! Let us judge ourselves in this matter that we be not judged.

3-4. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*

O you that profess to be His people, what more could Christ have done for you? What more could the Holy Spirit have done? What richer promises, what wiser precepts, what kinder providences, what more gracious patience? “Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” Whence came this? The stock was good, the husbandry was wise. Whence came these wild grapes?

5-6. *And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up brier and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*

“I will tell you what I will do.” He does not wait till the men of Judah have given their verdict. There was no need of any. The case was all too sadly clear. “I will take away the hedge thereof...and break down the wall thereof.” Those providences which guard men from sin shall be removed. You shall be allowed to sin if you like—and as you like. Your will shall have its freedom to the full. “And it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” There is no destruction like that which comes when God destroys the fruitless vineyard. When a human enemy or the wild boar out of the wood lays it waste, it may be restored again, but if, in righteous wrath, the Divine Owner of the vineyard Himself lays it waste, what hope remains for it?

What fearful words, “It shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste.” “It shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns.” Nothing happens worse to a church or to a man than to be altogether without affliction—no pruning, no digging, no restraints, no prickings of conscience, no smittings with rod. “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” That is the worst of all!

7. *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

Oh, when those who profess to be God's people live ungodly, dishonest, unchaste, ungracious lives, God is greatly grieved. His anger burns against such a church and against such a people. And well it may. “He looked for judgment,” for they professed to be taught of God, “but behold oppression.” He looked “for righteousness,” for they said they were righteous, “but behold a cry.” The passage has a special reference to God's ancient people, and one cannot read it without noting how literally this terrible threatening has been fulfilled.

8-10. *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.*

When men are covetous after the things of this world, God has a way of making them to be filled with disappointment and with bitterness. Woe unto any man who has any god but the living God, or who lives for any object but to glorify the Creator. Upon such a man, woes shall come innumerable.

11-12. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tablet, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.*

The covetous man was intoxicated with greed. Here is a man intoxicated with strong drink. It is never too early, it is never too late, for men to drink who once are carried away with this passion. They rise up early, they continue until night, and then, when they are inflamed with lust, all sorts of evil pleasures are sought after, and Satan leads them captive at his will. Woe unto such!

Now, it was because there were covetous men who were idolaters, because there were luxuriously living men who were drunkards, who had crept into Jerusalem and lived there, and spread evils among the people—it was for this that God declared that He would lay His vineyard waste. Are there none such in the church of God today? Ah, me! I fear there are professors who do not let it be known openly, but who in secret follow after these things.

13-14. *Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.*

What a wonderful description that is of the church of God when it goes wrong, when there is evil in it. Then evil multiplies itself greatly in the earth, and hell has to be made bigger, as it were. As one old preacher said, “They go to hell in droves.” There is none to stay them. When the church itself goes wrong, then the world is like that herd of swine that ran violently down a steep place to perish in the waters. Down, down they go! Oh, dreadful sight! Oh, terrible doom that falls upon the ungodly! Would God the church were well awake to see the danger of mankind, and that she so lived that God could bless her to the salvation of men.

15-16. *And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: but the LORD of host shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.*

For whoever may stain himself with sin, God will not. We may think lightly of sin, but He never does. We may be so foolish as to tolerate iniquity in ourselves and wink at it in others, but God will not do so. Even when sin was laid on Christ He smote Him to the death. Though He was not guilty of any sin, yet when our sin lay there, God turned away His face from His Son, and He died, and if He spared not sin in His Son, think you He will spare it in us? Ah, no! He is a just God, and He will clear His hands of any complicity with iniquity. The sixteenth verse is the song of Hannah, that greatest of ancient poetesses. It is the song of Mary, who copied it from Hannah, “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

17. *Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste place of the fat ones shall strangers eat.*

It is ever so. There is always room for the tender, and the gentle, and the weak, when God smites the haughty and the strong.

18. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cord of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:*

“Woe unto them.” When we get a woe in this Book of Blessings it is sent as a warning, that we may escape from woe. God’s woes are better than the devil’s welcomes. God always means man’s good, and only sets ill before him that he may turn from the dangers of a mistaken way, and so may escape the ill which lies at the end of it. Mayhap “Woe, woe, woe,” though it should sound with a dreadful din in our ear, may be the means of leading us to seek and find our Savior, and then throughout eternity no woe shall ever come near to us.

“That draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.” This is a very singular passage. It is not very easy to understand it at first sight. Here are some who are said to draw sin “with

cords of vanity,” which are slender enough, and yet they also draw it “as with a cart rope,” which is thick enough. They are harnessed to sin, and the traces appear to be fragile, insignificant, and soon broken. You can hardly touch them, for they are a mere sham, a fiction—vanity. What can be thinner and weaker than cobweb-cords of vanity? Yet when you attempt to break or remove them, they turn out to be cart ropes or wagon traces, fitted to bear the pull of horse or bullock.

Motives which have no logical force and would not bind a reasonable man for a moment, are, nevertheless, quite sufficient to hold the most of men in bondage. Such a slave is man to iniquity, that unworthy motives and indefensible reasons which appear no stronger than little cords nevertheless hold him as with bonds of steel, and he is fastened to the loaded wagon of his iniquity as a horse is fastened by a cart rope.

19. *That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!*

Blaspheming God, and rushing on the bosses of His buckler, defying Him to smite them. And all this came from dallying with sin, from drawing iniquity with cords of vanity Beware of the eggs of the cockatrice. Remember how drops wear stones, and little strokes fell great oaks. Do not play with a cobra, even if it be but a foot long. Keep from the edge of the precipice. Fly from the lion ere he springs upon you. Do not forge for yourself a net of iron, nor become the builder of your own prison house. May the Holy Ghost deliver you. May you touch the Cross, and find in it the power which will loose you and let you go.

Psalm Chapter 121. Verse 1. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from His high places and was ready to pour down succor for His injured servant.

Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain, let us hit up our eyes with hope, expectancy, desire, and confidence. Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged, be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God, the divine attributes, the immutable promises, the covenant, ordered in all things and sure, the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come.

2. *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*

What we need is help—help powerful, efficient, constant, we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in JEHOVAH, for our help comes from Him. Help is on the road and will not fail to reach us in due time, for He who sends it to us was never known to be too late. JEHOVAH who created all things is equal to every emergency, heaven and earth are at the disposal of Him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit His people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than He shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to Him who made them both, it is vain to trust the creatures, it is wise to trust the Creator.

3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for JEHOVAH will not permit our feet to slide, and if He will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer—“May he not suffer thy foot to be moved.” Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer, and we may pray believingly, for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of the feet is a

great mercy, but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep, we need him by day and by night, not a single step can be safely taken except under His guardian eye. God is the convoy and bodyguard of His saints. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep, His watchful eyes are never closed.

4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

The consoling truth must be repeated, it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—"The Keeper of Israel," and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over Him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word "Behold" is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor bodyguard around him, but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenseless man was safe as in a castle.

He keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasure, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it, it affirms the matter thus, "Lo he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel." Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct, they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

5. *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—JEHOVAH is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here, the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—"JEHOVAH," assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person—JEHOVAH is thy "keeper," in behalf of a favored individual—*thy*, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—JEHOVAH *is* thy keeper.

A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing, even divine goodness, which is a right-hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord JEHOVAH Himself will interpose to shade us and that in the most honorable manner, acting as our right-hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety.

6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. There are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills, mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim, spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity, eternally from the strain of over-powering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time, thus the ever-present protection never ceases.

7. *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word "keep" all through the psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps His own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far-reaching word of covering, it includes everything and excludes nothing, the wings of JEHOVAH amply guard His own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. Soul-keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept.

The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design, the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride, kept from the

world, the flesh, and the devil, kept for holier and greater things, kept in the love of God, kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

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