

BROAD RIVERS AND STREAMS

NO. 489

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities:

*thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down.
not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.*

But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.

wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby.

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king. he will save us.

*Thy tacklings are loosed. they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail:
then is the prey of a great spoil divided. the lame take the prey.”*

Isaiah 33:20-23

THIS prophecy was uttered when the city of Jerusalem was reduced to the direst extremity. The Assyrian hosts threatened the city with utter destruction. Rabshakeh, a fitting herald for his tyrannical master, had advanced to invest the walls while Sennacherib tarried at Lachish. False to all treaties, the heavy sum paid down by Hezekiah could not ensure the promised mercy from the ferocious despot. The treasuries of the city were exhausted and therefore no further attempt in that direction could be made.

No help could be looked for from any other nation. Even Egypt was in deadly fear of the great power of Nineveh. The Assyrians were strong as lions and cruel as evening wolves. No nation had ever equaled them in remorseless and wanton cruelty. Punishments the most horrible were constantly executed upon those whom they vanquished. Impalement, flaying alive, and piercing out the eyes were their ordinary amusements after the close of battle. Look at the stones disinterred from Nineveh, and you will see engraven there by themselves memorials of the horrible barbarities which they constantly perpetrated.

Sennacherib's army was exceeding great. It had already stormed many cities. Arphad, and Sepharvaim, Hamath, and Samaria had fallen an easy spoil—cities that were surrounded by rivers had been carried by diverting the current, and so drying up the streams, or else by using galleys with oars, the Assyrian monarch had reached the walls and applied the scaling ladders.

The army was so well-equipped, so numerous, and so thoroughly well-supplied with all munitions of war, that there was not the slightest hope of the escape of Jerusalem except by divine power. Yet the Assyrians did not shoot an arrow there, nor did they cast up a mound against it, for at nightfall the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and forty thousand men, and Sennacherib hastened back to his own land.

Brethren, you know the analogy here, how the church of Christ is every day surrounded by the most ferocious adversaries. She is like Jerusalem—all round about her the dogs of hell are yelping for her as their prey. For Satan has multitudes of faithful servants too glad to engage in battle against the Lord's anointed and against the church which He has redeemed by His own blood.

They are well-armed with an infernal panoply. They are very skillful, determined, and resolute. Not a stone will be left unturned to blot out the remembrance of Christ's kingdom from under heaven. But rejoice ye. Even if the darkest day should come, be not dismayed. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The church is not in danger. She is impregnably garrisoned. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and she shall abide in her place until He shall come who has made her beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. Until He shall come to translate her to the skies, to be the New

Jerusalem—the Bride, the Lamb’s wife—to glitter forever in the brightness which far outshines the light of the sun.

Let us now with profound attention meditate upon our text, and notice that, as the existence of Jerusalem was imperiled, the first promise of Isaiah was *that Jerusalem should still exist*—“Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,” and so on. But further, inasmuch as during the siege many unbelieving persons had found fault with the position of Jerusalem, because it was not surrounded by a river, the promise is given *that she shall have a glorious position*—“There the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.”

Nay, more than this, as a climax of blessing, *she is promised perpetual triumph over all her enemies*, since in her streams, “shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.” Or, if they come they shall prove a wreck—“Thy tacklings are loosed: they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.”

I. The first promise made to the church of God in our text is one SECURING TO HER AN EVERLASTING EXISTENCE. The church is not a temporary institution—it shall never be removed, but abides forever.

1. From the words of the text, I gather that the Jerusalem of God *shall exist as she is*. What was she in those days? She was the city of solemnities. She was the place where prayer and praise were wont to be made. So is she to continue throughout all generations.

The church of God is in this world the city of all true solemnities. Any prayer and praise that are not offered by the chosen of the Lord, who constitute the true and invisible church of God, are but vain oblations. Zion—the chosen church, redeemed by blood, called by the Spirit, and preserved by grace—Zion is the one consecrated enclosure in which sacrifices of righteousness can be acceptably offered.

This hallowed temple shall stand forever as the Lord’s chosen dwelling-place. Beloved, the day shall never come when the church shall cease to be the *temple of prayer*. The fire upon this altar shall never be quenched day nor night.

*“To Him shall constant prayer be made,
And princes throng to crown His head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning’s sacrifice.”*

There shall never lack a man in our Israel to hold up holy hands, like Moses, upon the mountain, that the hosts of God may prevail in the plain below. Elijahs may be taken away, but Elishas shall follow. Apostles may cease their perpetual supplications, but a train of intercessors shall follow in their footsteps. While earth brings forth her harvests, the church shall yield her sheaves of prayer.

Nor shall *praise* ever cease. The hallowed hymn, the psalm of victory, the hallelujah of triumphant joy—these shall never be suspended. In the worst days of the church, even when she assembled in the catacombs and gathered her sons for worship in the caves of the earth—even then she had her hymn of praise—even then they sang of Christ ascended and about to come. The roaring of the sea may cease, the thunders may be hushed, and the spheres may end their song, but the redeemed of the Lord must praise the name of JEHOVAH world without end.

Neither shall the church ever cease to be *the fountain of ministry*. The ministration of the Word is a part of our solemnities. There shall never come a time when the prophet’s voice shall be stilled. Our Lord will still raise pastors after His own heart and teachers anointed for His work. The living waters shall ever gush from the foot of Mount Zion, and the stream which welled up when Jesus sent forth His twelve disciples shall flow on, ever widening, ever deepening, “Till, like a sea of glory, it spreads from pole to pole.”

City of our solemnities! We delight to behold the feet of the ambassadors of the Lord. They are beautiful upon the mountains, for they proclaim to us glad tidings. How greatly do we rejoice that we shall never lack the heaven-sent messenger, nor shall the candlestick be removed out of its place.

Moreover, beloved, the ordinances of God's house, *such as baptism, and the sacred supper*, these shall never cease. There was a day when baptism was hardly known in the Christian church, save only among a persecuted few who were called heretics. Nevertheless, the hallowed stream has always been stirred by some who, "faithful to their Master found," were buried with Him in baptism unto death, and gave in baptism the answer of a good conscience towards God.

And the Lord's Supper, too, had almost ceased from the Christian church. The "mass," of course, continued, but what of that? Is that the Lord's Supper? Nay, verily, but a profane prostitution of the simplicity of God, a silly mystery more fitted to be styled the incantation of a haggard witch, than to be called the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But still, there were a faithful few, called heretics, who met together and brake bread in remembrance of their Lord and Master. And so, brethren, while seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, shall continue, until He come, we will show forth His death, we will set forth His burial, celebrating, according to His own will, the commands and ordinances which He Himself has given us.

City of our solemnities, methinks I see you now in vision! You are the place where God dwells between the curtains, hidden from the gaze of unhallowed eyes, seen only by those whom Christ has made kings and priests unto God! Never, never, never from you, O church of God, shall the presence of the Holy One depart!

No rushing of wings shall be heard, as in the siege of Jerusalem. No mysterious voice shall thunder, "Arise, let us go hence." "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," secures to you, O Zion, the presence of your Lord and Master forever. Methinks I see your altar—on it smokes the Lamb that has just been slain—still acceptable before the Lord and ever to remain the finished sacrifice.

*"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."*

Hallowed courts, you shall never be desecrated. Sacred rites, you shall never cease! The Lord has said it, and it must be. His church abides—though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, yet shall not His covenant of love depart from her—nor shall her safety ever be imperiled even unto the world's end.

2. Further, my brethren, it appears to me that the city is to exist, not only as the city of our solemnities, which it is, but as *a quiet habitation* which we would desire it to be. The church of God is always a quiet habitation, *even when her enemies surround her*.

Some of you may have seen, some months ago in the Exhibition, a Belgian picture representing the reading of the statute of the Duke of Alva in the Flemish Towns, establishing the Inquisition. Godly merchants are listening in deep solemnity of sorrow. The young maiden weeps upon her sister's bosom. The aged woman turns her streaming eyes to heaven.

All this the painter could depict, but he could not paint the deep heaven-born peace which still possessed the souls of the threatened ones—who for the Master's sake could suffer all worldly loss. That peace of God which passes all understanding, lives even in the day of trial.

You know what Martin Luther said, whenever any trouble came, "Come, let us go in and sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and defy the devil." And oh, how grandly that old Psalm would swell from the deep bass voices of the Reformer and his companions—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains be carried

into the midst of the sea.” With all her foes about her, I say, the church of God is evermore a quiet habitation.

But how quiet is she, beloved, *when her enemies are not allowed to prey upon her!* “Then had the churches rest,” says the Holy Ghost in the Acts of the Apostles, and verily, the text applies to us now. We sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree, none making us afraid. And besides the quiet we enjoy politically, I thank God, that in this church at least, we know what quiet means in *our communion with one another*.

Anywhere where the Holy Spirit dwells, there will be quietness. The Holy Spirit, you know, is represented to us as a dove—doves love not the storm, and the Spirit of God abides not where there is noise, strife, controversy, and division. No, there must be peace and quietness.

And you, my beloved friends, who are really in the church of Christ—mark, you may be in our church, and not in the church of Christ—you may make a profession of being in the church, and not be in the invisible, mysterious, secret body of the faithful—but if you really be among that chosen number, you will enjoy great quietness. You will be able to say with the apostle, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You will get a hold of the psalmist’s meaning when he said, “So he giveth his beloved sleep.” You will rest in God’s love even as God rests in it.

Happy day! happy day! for those who, by the eye of faith, can look into the future after Christ shall come, who can behold the glad millennial age, for they shall understand yet more fully the meaning of this prophecy, “Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,” when everywhere Christ shall be known, when in every land the fifth and last empire shall rule. Then, as in the days of Solomon, there shall be no war, but peace, peace forever.

Till then, the God of all peace is with us and we may be sure that all is well. Our quietness must continue, for the church nestles under the wings of God. How can she be disquieted? The mountains of His power are round about her. How can she be carried by storm? Her Lord is a wall of fire encircling her. Who can touch her? He is the glory in the midst of her. How can she fear? He is all in all to her. He wears her on His breast. He has written her name on His hands. She is the jewel of His crown and the bracelet of His arm. Oh, how blessed must she be!

3. But further, our text seems to indicate that there were some persons who doubted all this, and said, “Well, but you speak of this city as though it could stand an attack. It cannot—it is such a feeble place, it is like a tent—it can soon be stormed, a gust of wind can blow it over.” The Lord anticipates this difficulty, and shows *that the feebleness of Jerusalem should be no reason why she should not still continue to exist*.

She is a tabernacle—a mere tent—but she is a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. It is true that to human eyes she seems to have no huge stones, no gates of brass, no bulwarks of solid masonry. But though she has nothing but cords and stakes, yet her stakes shall not be loosed, nor shall her cords be snapped.

Oh! beloved, one delights to think of the feebleness of the church, as magnifying the power of Him who keeps her! What can be more feeble than the church of God? She has no carnal weapons. “My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight.” The church has no great riches, the most of her followers are poor. She has no wisdom. They who use logic and cunning can soon overthrow her disciples and ridicule her advocates.

She understands not the wisdom of human speech, or, rather, she renounces it and speaks with simplicity, as she ought to speak. Philosophers laugh at her. Kings hardly take her into account. They think the church so insignificant that they can put out her candle when they will. But ah! not so. the church is still secure, despite her feebleness.

It is amazing how during these last nineteen centuries, God has been pleased to keep that spark alive. All the devils in hell have been spitting at this candle, but it burns still—they have sought to throw the whole of the floods of evil upon the heaven-kindled spark, but the spark has lived still. They have tried

to stamp it out, but it has blazed the more. The church's feebleness, because it drives her to God, is the church's strength. I pray God that our church may never confide in wisdom, or wit, or eloquence, or riches, or rank, or fame. No, Lord, You are the reinforced pillar of Your church's sure support, and if we rest on You, we are secure. But if once we depend elsewhere, we fall to our confusion.

4. Further, to complete this part of the promise, the city, notwithstanding all her feebleness, *is to be forever complete*. If I understand the last two sentences—"Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken," we learn here *that all the true members of the church are safe*.

Some of them may be driven into the earth as the stakes are driven, with a heavy mallet—but the strokes of tribulation shall only give them a better hold, and minister stability to the whole structure. Satan may seek to pull them up, and the winds may blow on the tent enough to tear up the stakes that hold it, but no hurricane or raging Simoom shall cast down the divine habitation.

Cords are apt to be snapped, and if they be long used, the strands at last may rot, and new cords and new stakes may be required—but not so with the church of God. If you are one of the cords or the stakes of the church, you shall never be cast away, the Lord will take care, not only to preserve the church as a whole, but each individual part of it.

I need not enlarge here, for you are all sound in your belief of final perseverance. What would we do without that precious doctrine! Oh! brethren, if one cord could be snapped surely it were myself. If one stake could be removed, I think I hear you say, "It must be myself. I must be moved. I must be cast away."

But not one shall be. Just as the stones were taken out of the quarry and all shaped, to be put in their own position in Solomon's temple, and no one stone could take another stone's niche, so you have your place appointed you, and you are being quarried today to be made into the right shape for it, and you, and no one but you, can occupy that place in the temple of God in heaven. And you shall shine there as a polished stone forever.

But I think, dear friends, that this also relates *to the doctrines of the Gospel*. Every day produces some improved divinity. Every now and then, to suit the times, a new edition of the Gospel is issued. Young gentlemen at college are taught not to preach the common ordinary doctrines, such as John Calvin, St. Augustine, and the apostle Paul preached. They must go to Germany and muddle their own heads, and then come forth to muddle other people's. They must have some philosophical divinity, some novelty, something more refined than that which would attract the mob and gather together the common people.

Thinking people must be cared for. Sermons must be full of intellectual matter. The old apostles were but fishermen, and of course they could not preach more than fishermen's education would enable them to comprehend, but these gentlemen have taken their degrees, and can climb to far greater heights and descend into far profounder depths than plain Peter or illiterate John.

Well, dear friends, *we* are content with the old wine since it is the best. Christ's Gospel is no new Gospel. And moreover, we are old-fashioned enough to believe that not one doctrine is to be altered, nor half a doctrine, nor the thousandth part of a doctrine, no, nor yet the form of a doctrine. We would "hold fast the form of sound words"—not only the principle mark—but the *words*. And not only the words, but the very *form* in which the words were molded.

"Words, words, words," says somebody, "what is the use of words, and forms, and creeds? Why, these are old musty, crusty documents, only sectarians care about them." Ay, then, let us be sectarians. Let us hold with force and strength of mind the very form of sound words which has been delivered unto us. Not one of the stakes shall be removed, nor one of the cords be loosened.

And so with *the ordinances*. We do not believe, for instance, that we have any power to change the immersion which was practiced by the apostles into sprinkling—nor take infants instead of believers. We think that not one of the cords can be removed, nor one of the stakes be taken out of its place. We do

not think we have any right to change the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine into a mass, and thus make a new ceremony, instead of perpetuating that which was delivered unto us.

No, let the old Gospel be the old Gospel. “To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” We must keep to the same practices, and believe the same truths even unto the end.

Alas for you, you cities of earth, you have tottered to your fall! A heap of sand, a mountain of ruin is to be found where once Babylon lifted her proud head, and where Nineveh exalted her brazen brow! Even old Rome has crumbled and her pillars lie prostrate. Her theaters are but a place of emptiness and her temples but deserted buildings.

But you, O church of God, you still exist. Not one of your pillars has been shaken. Not a column has left its base or lost its capital. Riveted and held fast by more than iron bands, the whole of your fabric is as unmoved as the pillars of the universe. Every stone is as new and strong as when first JEHOVAH digged your deep foundations, and laid your stones in the fair vermilion cement of Jesu’s precious blood.

Still do your pinnacles glisten in the sun, O you bejeweled city! No change has tarnished you. Time has no tooth to devour your glories, no foot to trample on your joys. You are the Eternal City and all things else are but shadow, mist, and dream. Like the God that made you, you are immortal, invisible, the only true church, as He is the only true God. Unto Him that built you and that dwells in you, be glory both now and forever. Amen.

II. The second part of our subject is THE PREEMINENT POSITION.

It was a cause of lamenting to many of the sinners in Zion that Jerusalem was not better defended. The most approved method of ancient defense was to surround the city by a broad moat. Joab thought it no mean achievement when he took the “city of waters.” Hence, God here meets all the wishes of His people by telling them that He will be to them all that broad rivers and streams could possibly be. Jerusalem had nothing but its little brook Kidron, which was not worth the mentioning, for it could be no means of defense at all in a day of siege. But He, even JEHOVAH, will be to them all that broad rivers and streams would by comparison suggest.

At the meaning of this promise, I must now very hastily glance. First, I think it means *fertility*. Understand that especially in the East, broad rivers and streams are very necessary to fertilize the earth. Egypt owed all her harvests to the Nile. And the great plain of Mesopotamia, in which Nineveh and Babylon were situated, were watered by two great rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates—and by innumerable streams which intersected the intervening country, and by canals and little rills, by means of which the whole land was irrigated. It is now a desert because there is no irrigation, but then it was the most fertile part of the world.

We are told in the first chapters of Genesis concerning Eden, that there went a river through it. It had not been Eden without its Hiddekel. Well, now, Jerusalem had none of these broad rivers or streams, but her God is to be all that to her.

O, beloved, how fertile God makes His church. Let but the Lord JEHOVAH come among His people and there are many conversions. Her sons and daughters are as many as the sand of the sea and her offspring like the gravel thereof. Only let the Lord be with the minister and with the church, and we shall have to say—“Who are these who fly as a cloud, and like doves to their windows?”

Moreover, in your heart and mine, if we have JEHOVAH there, He will be to us a place of broad rivers and streams, and we shall be fertile in all graces. Perhaps this morning you feel like a desert, bringing forth no fruit. Ah! but think of your glorious Lord. Think of the glory of all His attributes—specially think of the glory of His grace, the glory of His finished work for you, the glory of His cross, and of His throne.

You will find that He will give you fertility—your faith shall grow and all your graces shall flourish. The glorious Lord can make us like a tree planted by the rivers of water so that we shall bring forth our fruit in our season. And as for good works, which are the true fruit of such as the Lord loves, let but

JEHOVAH dwell in us, let His Spirit abide in us, let Christ be in constant fellowship with our souls, and we shall abound in every good work to the glory of God. We want no Tigris. We need no Euphrates. We seek no Nile—JEHOVAH is to us a place of broad rivers and streams. Our fruit surely blossoms and ripens in its time when God, the glorious Lord, is with us.

Broad rivers signify not only fertile soil, but *abundance to the inhabitants*. Places near broad rivers produce a great variety of plants. We know that the children of Israel regretted that they had left the leeks, and garlic, and onions, and cucumbers, and melons of Egypt—plants that grew by the rivers.

Besides, where there are rivers, there is an abundance of fish of all kinds, and in the fat pastures, such as Goshen, which were well-watered by the Nile, abundance of cattle are reared, while the abundant harvests which are there produced through the admirable irrigation make the lands blessed with broad rivers and streams the sunniest of climes.

Well now, our God is all this to His church. Having God she has abundance. What can she ask for that He will not give her? What need can she have which He will not supply? Oh! you citizens of Zion, what are your wants this morning? My Master sends me out like a herald from a king, and He bids me cry in the streets of this Zion, “Ho, ye that have any need, come to your King, and He will supply you.”

Want you the bread of life? It drops like manna from the sky. Want you refreshing streams? The rock follows you and that Rock is Christ. “In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” If you have any want it is your own fault. If you are straitened, you are not straitened in Him, but in your own heart.

Broad rivers and streams in like manner point to *commerce*. We know that in Holland especially the broad rivers and streams make that nation what it is. The harbors are so safe, the rivers so broad, and the canals so innumerable, that in every place commerce is easy, and the ends of the earth are linked to the nation by its broad rivers and streams.

In that country we find curious importations hardly known to any other people, because they have gathered up the treasures of the far-off lands, and there was a time when their broad rivers and streams enabled them to engross the mercantile power of the whole universe.

Well, beloved, our *glorious* Lord—keep the adjective as well as the noun—our glorious Lord is to be to us a place of commerce. Through God we have commerce with the past—the riches of Calvary, the riches of the covenant, the riches of the old age of election, the riches of eternity—all come to us down the broad stream of our gracious Lord.

We have commerce, too, with the future. What galleys, laden to the water’s edge, come to us from the millennium! What visions we have of the days of heaven upon earth. Through our glorious Lord, we have commerce with angels, commerce with the bright spirits washed in blood that sing before the throne—nay, better still, we have commerce with the Infinite One, with eternity, with self-existence, with immutability, with omnipotence, with omniscience—for our glorious Lord is to us a place of broad rivers and streams.

I wonder how Unitarians find comfort, since they have no glorious Lord—they have an inglorious Lord—and I think I may say of Unitarianism, as our prophet here says concerning Assyria, that, having no glorious Lord, “Their tacklings are loosed, they cannot well strengthen their mast, they cannot spread the sail; there is the prey of a great spoil taken from them, the lame take the prey.” But we who have a glorious Lord, an Incarnate God, God in Christ Jesus, we, I say, have commerce with heaven.

Finally, broad rivers and streams are specially intended to set forth *security*. We have already alluded to our own happy island. Dr. Watts has said of it—

*“Oh, Britain, praise thy mighty God,
And make His honours known abroad;
He bade the ocean round thee flow,
Not bars of brass could guard thee so.”*

In the memorable '88, when the Spanish Armada, as the old divines of that age said, "turreted the seas" till the high prows of the vessels hid the waves of the ocean, God blew with His winds and all Spain's mighty hosts were broken, and God's favored isle was free.

We were doubtless spared the horrors of war under the first Napoleon through our narrow firth. It was especially so in the old times of ancient warfare. Then a narrow trench was almost as useful as a broad channel would be now, for they had no ready means of crossing so well, though on old Assyrian sculptures, we see galleys with oars crossing over rivers. And we have one or two sculptures, I believe, in the British Museum, of the Assyrian king turning the river into another channel so that he might the more easily take the city. But still, rivers were for a defense.

Oh! beloved, what a defense is God to His church! Ah! the devil cannot cross this broad river of God. Between me and you, O fiend of hell, is my God. Do remember this, Christian. Between you and your arch-enemy is your God. Satan has to stand on the other side, and oh, how he wishes he could dry up that stream, but God is omnipotent.

How Satan wishes he could change the current, but fear not, for God abides immutably the same. How he wishes he could get at you and me—but only once let us get safe landed in Zion—we may look over its walls across the broad rivers and streams, and remember that we are out of gunshot of the enemy so far as our spiritual existence is concerned. He cannot destroy us. Worry us, he may—for we are such timid souls—but kill he cannot, for God, even our mighty God, keeps us safe beyond all possibility of destruction.

III. We come now to offer one or two words on the last point, upon which we have already entrenched. The last point is ETERNAL SAFETY.

I have already said that these broad rivers did not always answer the purpose of defending the city, because the Assyrian king carried galleys with him overland and thus took the city. But concerning this broad river, it is written, "There shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby," to come up to the walls to attack the bulwarks.

Our text teaches us *that to the eye of faith the church has no enemies at all*. "Wherein shall go no galley with oars." "No enemies at all," says one. "Why there are enemies to the truth everywhere. We see the enemies of God creeping in everywhere. The whole world is in arms against us." But faith so clearly perceives the feebleness and the frailty of man that, like her Lord, she takes up all the nations as a very little thing and counts all her adversaries to be but as a drop in the bucket.

You ramble in your garden, perhaps, in the summer time, and a spider has spun its stoutest web across your path. You walk along, and you never think that there is anything to hinder you, and yet there are those spiders' strong webs, which would have caught a thousand flies, but they do not impede you.

So is it with God's glorious church—there are barriers across her path, but they are only spider's webs. On she walks—she has no adversaries, for she counts her adversaries to be nothing. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. "They that war against us shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought," thus says the Lord.

Further, mark, dear friends, that when we are compelled to see that the church has adversaries, yet, according to the promise, *those adversaries shall be put to confusion*. They have launched the bark. The galley with oars is on the sea. The text does not say that no galley with oars shall ever be there, but "no galley with oars shall go there."

Now, in order to make it "go" they must fix the mast. They must gird the tacklings, or how shall they spread the sail, and how shall they proceed on their way? Ah! but they cannot, they cannot strengthen their mast. Their tacklings are loosed. They are like mariners reeling to and fro. They stagger like drunken men. They are at their wit's end.

They know not how to make the mast stand in its socket. It was shaped and fashioned at Nineveh. It has been used in other sieges and it answered well, but this time it will not fit into its socket. The wind

blows furiously. They cannot fasten the tacklings in their proper places. They know not where to find the ropes and spars. They cannot strengthen the mast nor spread the sail!

Oh! how glorious it is to see the confusion of God's enemies. Some say the devil is wise, but he is a fool and has been a fool from the very beginning. All he has ever done has been to throw stones in the sky which have fallen down upon his own head. He always shoots his arrows the wrong end foremost, and then they come back again with their points toward him.

Somehow or other, the crafty old fox, when undermining the church's fall, manages to cover himself with filth. When the whole of this world's drama shall come to an end, there will be one tremendous laugh from earth and heaven against the devil, for they will say, "Aha! Aha! Aha! he has been but God's drudge all the while. He has been but God's drudge, working out God's glory. He thought he was having his own way, and doing his own will, and he has been but a black slave to carry the materials out of which God shall bring forth triumphs that shall shine throughout eternity." O beloved, we need not be afraid. Our enemies are in confusion. They do not know how to attack us.

And then, faith not only sees the confusion of her adversaries, but she also believes *they are so utterly destroyed that she may go out and spoil them*. They could not spread the sails. They could not fix the mast. See, the wind has driven them on yonder rock. How the ship breaks. How she splits. There now, she divides in pieces, and her cargo is drifted on the shore—and the men and the women, and lame men are leaning on their staves, and little children all run down to the beach and gather the spoil from the wrecked ship.

So it always has been in every attack that has been made on the church—we have always seen the wreck of our adversaries and gathered spoils therefrom. I see the ship launched once again. She has had her name altered. She has sailed from a distant port—not quite from the land from whence Solomon derived his apes and peacocks, but almost as far. She has a proud helmsman, who wears a miter on his head, and this time there are terrible expectations that Zion's city will be taken and destroyed.

What will be the result, do you suppose, of the recent attack upon Christianity? Why, the result of it will be that we shall have the richest spoil we have had for years. The Pentateuch, the blessed old Pentateuch, which was the only Bible, you remember, David ever had to read—the Book which David used to spell over and say blessed was the man who searched it day and night—that old-fashioned Pentateuch—why, we had almost forgotten it!

People said, "Ah, yes, all very well to preach on the Gospels and sometimes on the epistles, but the Pentateuch is an old-fashioned book of little importance." Consequently there are very few comments upon the Pentateuch, which is, perhaps, the most neglected part of all inspired writ. And what will be the effect of this new galley with oars? Why, we shall all read the Pentateuch more.

I believe that the Pentateuch is the text of all the Bible, that the Pentateuch is the law, the statute, *the* Book. And if any part of Scripture has the preeminence, it is the five books of Moses. We shall look over those five books again. "In his law we will begin to meditate both day and night." And then, there will be comments written, there will be sermons preached, and even those who are the feeblest in our Zion, even the little children, will get some of the spoil.

We shall gather some of the rich and rare treasures that have been hidden in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers. We shall have to say, "Thank God that ever the galley with oars came here, for the spoil is very great, and we are all made rich thereby." I wish they would attack some other part of Scripture. Let some other portion of Scripture be attacked, and as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so shall the Word of God be.

Wherever I see the devil's black finger, I am obliged to him, for I feel inclined to think there must be something there that is good, or else he would not have pointed it out as an object of attack to his followers. Let us rest assured, dearly beloved, that the spoil shall surely come in and that we shall not be destroyed.

And what is to be the end of it all? Our text *ascribes glory to a Triune God*. The church is, after all her attacks, and all her salvations, to ascribe glory to the three-one JEHOVAH. Read the verse, dear

friends, “For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king”—three, yet One.

O Lord, be Thou exalted! Our Father which art in heaven, You sit on the throne, and You are Judge! Jesus, Son of Mary, and Son of God, You by Your holy life, have set us such an example that You are our Law-giver! And You, indwelling Spirit, You are with us, and therefore the shout of a King is in the midst of our camps. Instead of doubting, fearing, and trembling, let us betake ourselves to song.

The hope of the church does not rest in her ministers, but in her God; not in her wisdom, but in Him; not in her eloquence, but in His promise; not in her might or in her numbers, but in His great strength, and in the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.

Dear friends, let us roll all our cares on God this morning. Look up to God alone. Remember, you are saved. Do not believe Satan’s lies. Hold fast to God’s truth. He is on your side. You have trusted yourselves in your Redeemer’s hand. You are a believer in Christ. You are therefore saved. Being saved, expect to see every temptation minister to your growth. Expect that every trial shall make you richer in grace, and go home and keep your heart in tune, singing unto God, praising, and blessing, and magnifying His name.

Oh! I wish we were all citizens of Zion! I wish we were all members and had rights of burgesship in this blessed city! The gates are open and aliens who enter become citizens at once. To become a citizen all that is needed is to be nothing and to let Christ be everything. Trust Christ and you are enrolled a free man—and then from that day all the glorious things that are spoken of Zion are spoken of you. You shall share her blessedness on earth and her triumph above.

The Lord now seal these words with His own Spirit for His own sake. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.