

SOWN LIGHT NO. 836

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”
Psalm 97:11.*

THIS appears to be the doctrine of the entire Psalm, and the verse which follows, “Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous,” is intended to be the practical inference drawn from the whole of it. God would have His people believe that better times are in store for them, and in the faith of the coming good, He would have them even now rejoice and be exceedingly glad. If you will read the Psalm, you will notice that every verse may give us some strengthening of our faith as to the future blessedness of those that fear the Lord.

The first verse declares that “the LORD reigns.” Shall so righteous a one sit upon the throne, and shall not those that fear Him have their reward? If He be King, will He suffer His loyal subjects to endure damage? Will He not ultimately come to their rescue?

The second verse tells us that “clouds and darkness are round about him,” and this explains why for the present the upright in heart may seem to be forgotten. God’s dispensations are not always clear. It is His glory to conceal a thing. He wraps Himself about in mystery, for the brightness of His glory is dark with excessive light. If His way is unsearchable, and His design deep beyond human understanding, we need not be surprised if we find it so in the dispensations of His providence towards His people. But still, as the second verse tells us, “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne,” we may be certain, therefore, that He will not be unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love, and that in dealing out judgment, both to His saints and to the ungodly, He will neither forget to reward the first nor to condemn the second.

The third verse, which describes the glory of the divine power as displayed in deeds of vengeance, when the enemies of God are burnt up by fire, goes to prove that He will with equal certainty reward His people, for He who is stern to punish, surely will not be unrighteous to forget the gracious service of His saints. If He has promised, He will be as certain to keep His promise as He has been to fulfill His threatenings. He will not be true on the black side towards the undeserving, and then be false on the bright side towards those who are made meritorious through the righteousness of His dear Son. He who keeps the thunder, and by and by will launch it from His hand, also reserves mercy for His chosen, and favor for His people.

Indeed, the sixth verse declares that the very constitution of the universe proves this—that every star twinkling in its sphere proclaims the righteousness and wisdom of God, and therefore, since for Him to be righteous is for His people ultimately to be blessed, we conclude that “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

With no other preface than this, I shall take you at once to this very singular text, dwelling first upon the remarkable metaphor here used—*sown light*, and then, enlarging upon that metaphor, taking you to *see the sowing*, and thirdly, to *survey and measure the field*, and fourthly, to take an *outlook upon the harvest in the future*.

I. First, then, the metaphor is a rather singular one, and yet full of poetry—LIGHT IS SOWN. We can very soon catch the idea if we follow Milton in his speaking of the morning—

*“Now morn, her rosy steps in th’ eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl.”*

The sun, like a sower, scatters broadcast his beams of light upon the once dark earth. Look up at night upon the sky bespangled with stars, and it seems as though God scattered them like gold dust upon the floor of heaven in picturesque irregularity, thereby sowing light. Or if you want a fact which comes nearer to the sowing of light literally than anything which our poets have written, think of our vast coal beds which are literally so much sown light. The sun shone upon primeval forests, and the monstrous ferns grew and expanded under the quickening influence. They fell, as fall the leaves of chestnut and of oak in these autumns of our latter days, and there they lie stored deep down in the great cellars of nature for man's use, so much sown light, I say, which springs up beneath the hand of man in harvests of flame; which flood our streets with light, and cheer our hearths with heat.

Sown light, then, is neither unpoetical nor yet altogether un-literal. There is such a thing as a matter-of-fact, and we may use the expression rightly enough, without grotesqueness of metaphor. Understand then, that happiness, joy, gladness, symbolized by light, have been sown by God in fields that will surely yield their harvest for all those whom by His grace He has made upright in heart.

Sown light signifies, first, that light has been diffused. That which is sown is scattered. Before sowing, it was in the bag, or stored up in the granary, but the sowing scatters it along the furrows. There was happiness always in the mind of God. He is unspeakably blessed in Himself. We cannot dissociate the idea of Godhead from that of infinite delight. But all this happiness was nothing to us, we could not reach it, God might have been infinitely blessed, but we might have been shut up in hell, gnawing our iron bonds in the desperation of unutterable agony. But in due time, according to the eternal purpose, God sowed happiness for His people, took it, as it were, out of Himself, and cast it broadcast in the fields of His eternal purposes, and in the decrees of His divine providence, that there might be a harvest, not for Himself, for He was happy enough, but for all those whom He gave to Christ, who are made righteous in His righteousness, and upright through His Spirit.

Thank God, you who love Jesus, and are resting upon His atonement, that God's happiness is not kept to Himself, but is diffused for you and the whole company of His elect, and that the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore are not kept within their secret springs, but made to flow like a river, that you with all the blood-bought may drink thereof to the full.

Seed that is sown is not in hand. After the husbandman has scattered his wheat he cannot say, "Here it is." It is out of sight, gone from him. You may walk over the fields for the next few weeks and see no trace of it, and fools might say, "Ah! now so much wheat is gone from him, he is so much the poorer, he has it not." So the gladness which belongs to the righteous is not to be regarded as a thing of the present. Their great store of pleasure is yet to come, it is light that is sown, not light that now gleams upon their eyes, it is a gladness that has been buried beneath the clods for a special purpose, not a gladness which is now spread upon the table as bread that has been baked in the oven. The believer's greatest happiness is not like bread ready for food, it is seed buried by the sower. Brethren, let us remember that this world is not our rest—

***"We look for a city that hands have not piled,
We seek for a country by sin undefiled."***

To look for happiness here were to seek for the living among the dead. Christ is not here, for He has risen, and our joy is not here, for our joy has risen with Him. Seed sown then is not within sight, and the great bulk of the Christian's happiness is not a thing of present enjoyment, not what he can see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and touch with the hands, it is a matter of faith, it is not to be feasted on today, but for a purpose it is withheld until patience has had her perfect work, and seen her joy blossom and bud, and open and ripen under the smile of the Lord her God.

As seed sown is not visible, so *it is not expected that it shall be seen or enjoyed tomorrow.* "The husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth." Only little children put their seeds into the ground and then turn up the mold to discover whether the seeds are growing on the morrow. It was said of the northern nations, near the pole, and said truthfully, that they sowed their barley in the morning and reaped it at night, because the sun goes not down for four mouths at a time, but in sober truth we must not expect to have the rewards of grace given to us immediately as we believe. This is the time for

running, not for tarrying to gaze upon the prize. This is the hour for the battle, not yet may we rest on our laurels. There must be a trial of our patience and our faith. God delights that His servants should be put through many exercises and ordeals, in order that the praise of the glory of His grace may be manifest in them and through them, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Wait, then, Christian, be content to wait. The Bridegroom comes quickly, rest assured of that, and if you think He lingers, ask for greater patience that you may patiently work on, continuing steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Expect not your full reward of joy tomorrow, your lot is on the other side of Jordan, the bells of your wedding day shall ring out in another world, and your coronation will be received in the ivory palaces, upon which the sun has never shone. You are espoused to a Husband who is not here, you look for a kingdom far above these changeful skies. Have patience, then, till the great hour shall come, and the King shall descend to take His own.

But while seed sown is not in sight, and is not expected to be seen tomorrow, yet *it is not lost*. No one but a person without sense would say that the farmer has lost so much of his capital when he has cast it in the form of seed-corn into the furrows. Nay, sir, he reckons that he has gained when he has sown, for the seed in the granary was worth so much, but that in the furrow is worth so much more on account of the labor expended in the sowing. The husbandman counts it gain to have sown his corn. He has transferred his treasure from one bank into another. He does not reckon that any of it has been lost.

So with the happiness of a Christian. We may today seem less happy than the gay worldling who flaunts himself in the sunlight of human approbation, but it is not a loss to renounce such inferior joys. The postponement of our joys, our waiting, our letting joy lay by at interest, our tarrying for a moment that our position may be the richer, when we come into our estate, is no loss. Joy self-denied is not lost. Lost, my brethren? Lost, the happiness of a single hour in which we have wept for sin! Lost, the happiness of a single moment in which we have suffered affliction for Christ's sake, through persecution and slander! Nay, verily, it is put to our account, and the record of it remains in the eternal archives, against the day when the Judge of all the earth shall measure out the portions of His people.

Corn sown is not lost, but *is actually in possession still*. If a farmer had to sell his field, he would of course ask much more for that in which the seed was sown than for one which was remaining fallow, because he counts that seed sown is still his own property. He cannot see it, but he knows it is there among those crumbling clods. He reckons that sown wheat, and puts it down in every inventory of his property. That seed which is under the soil is as certainly his as that which remains in the stack, or bound up in the sacks, and so you may reckon the joys of the hereafter as your own, and you ought so to reckon them, they are the best part of your estate, they are yours, though you do not enjoy them.

Yours today the seraph's wing and the angel's harp, yours today the cherubic song and the bliss of the immortals, the presence of the Lord, and the vision of His face. Come, count upon the resurrection, it is yours; upon the glory that follows it, it is yours; upon the millennium with all its splendor, it is yours; upon eternity with its unutterable joys, all these things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You cannot see the heavenly light, you expect not to see it as yet, but, so far from being lost, it is yours this very day, and you only need by faith to write it down upon the tablets of hope, and today rejoice that you are rich in infinite possessions.

Sown seed *is in the custody of God*. JEHOVAH is the farmer's banker. Who can take care of those bags of wheat which have been thrown out from the hand during the last few weeks? Who, indeed, but the covenant God, who has said, "While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease"? There may come the rotting under the clods, the worm, the bird, the mildew, the blast, there may come the long drought or the too plenteous moisture, but the farmer has scarcely a hand in the future destiny of his wheat and barley, the crop remains with God. You merchants may fancy you can do without the Lord, but the man who has to till the soil is obliged to feel, if he has any sensibility, his entire dependence upon the God of the rain cloud and the Lord of the sun.

So, beloved, here is our comfort. The light that is sown for the righteous is in the custody of God. Our future happiness, our eternal bliss, are kept by the great guardian of Israel, who does neither slumber nor sleep. Be not afraid, therefore, that you shall lose your heaven, for Christ keeps it for you.

He has gone to take possession of it in your name, as your representative, and He will not suffer any to rob you of your entailed heritage. He will come a second time to take you to Himself to enjoy the portion which He has prepared for you. Oh, blessed fact, that the joys of the hereafter are in such keeping! Brethren, we have not to fight to maintain our rights in the eternal land, we have not to dispute in courts of law in order to maintain our claim to the everlasting inheritance. He is at the Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified, and He takes care that all shall be safe and well for the people of His eternal choice! Light is sown for the righteous, that is to say it is put into the custody of heaven, where it will be infallibly safe.

A thing that is sown is not only put into God's custody, but it is put *there with a purpose, that it may come back to us greatly multiplied*. The believer gives up in this life his self-seeking, he suffers some degree of self-denial, he yields up his own boastings to trust in Christ's righteousness, and he makes a good bargain thereby. What if he should be made poor by being honest, or if he should have to suffer through following Christ, yet the return, the reward, the recompense—these are so exceeding abundant that the present light affliction is not worthy to be compared therewith. We suffer for a moment that we may reign forever. We stoop for a second that we may be lifted up world without end. We shall get back the seed-corn multiplied ten thousand times ten thousand, and we shall bless and magnify forever and ever the glorious Sower who sowed such a harvest for us.

The drift, the whole drift, and meaning of this sown light is just this—that the righteous have their best things yet to come. God has begun very graciously with some of us, indeed, so well, that our loudest music falls flat compared with the praise which He deserves. And you are afraid, sometimes, that God will be worse in the future than He has been in the past! O think not so hardly of Him! You know what kind of feast the great Master makes. He does not bring forth His best wine first and then afterwards brings forth the worst. Oh, no! but He puts upon His table the worst, if so I may say, first, good as that is, and then we may say of Him afterwards, "You have kept the best wine until now." The summers of our God do not begin with fervent heat and end with cold. God is not one who flatters us at the first to deal sternly with us at the last, we shall go from strength to strength, from good to something better, and until life's happiness culminates in heaven's, we shall see more and more of the loving-kindness of the Lord. Our best is yet to come, and the mercy that is to come will be always coming, until life's end.

There is a story told of Rowland Hill, which I have no doubt is true, because it is so characteristic of the man's eccentricity and generosity. Some one or other had given him a hundred pounds to send to an extremely poor minister, but thinking it was too much to send him all at once, he sent him five pounds in a letter with simply these words inside the envelope, "More to follow." In a few days' time, the good man had another letter by the post, and letters by the post were rarities in those days, when he opened it there was five pounds again, with just these words, "And more to follow." A day or two after there came another, and still the same words, "And more to follow." And so it continued twenty times, the good man being more and more astounded at these letters coming thus by post with always the sentence, "And more to follow."

Now, every blessing that comes from God is sent in just such an envelope, with the same message, "And more to follow." "I forgive you your sins, but there's more to follow." "I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow." "I adopt you into My family, but there's more to follow." "I educate you for heaven, but there's more to follow." "I have helped you even to old age, but there's still more to follow." "I will bring you to the brink of Jordan, and bid you sit down and sing on its black banks, on the banks of the black stream, but there's more to follow. In the midst of that river, as you are passing into the world of spirits, My mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come there shall still be more to follow." Light is still sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

II. Secondly, having opened the metaphor of sown light, let us now speak of the SOWING itself.

When were the happiness and security of the righteous sown for them? Answer, there are three great Sowers, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and all these have sown light for the chosen people. First, *the Father*. In long ages past, or ever the world was, it was in the Eternal mind to ordain unto Himself a

people who should show forth His praise. In His august mind it was determined that although His loved ones should fall in Adam, they should be raised in Christ; should be chosen over and above all their fellows, and in spite of their sins should be loved with an everlasting love, should be kept in time, should be glorified in eternity.

Now all those great decrees of God, of which He has revealed some inklings in His Word, were so much sowing of light for the righteous, so much provision of gladness in the future for the upright in heart. Yea, I venture to say that there was not a decree of God which in some way or other did not promote the happiness of His people, not a single covenant provision, not a single purpose of eternal wisdom but was intended and adapted to bring joy and peace to them. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all the purposes of God wrought together for this great central purpose of His, that He might have an elect people in whom His name should be glorified.

Think now for a moment, beloved, of the thoughts of God to you. Long, I say, before the sun began to shine, what thoughts of love were in the bosom of the Father! Trace up the mercies of the present to those grand projects of the past, and praise and magnify the name of God that such unworthy sinners as we are should be the objects of such infinite conceptions. When the covenant at length was formed between the Father, the Son, and the blessed Spirit, when the decree began to take shape and to be revealed, when in the volume of the Book covenant mercies were written down for us, all the tenure of that covenant, every line, and jot and tittle, was so much sowing of light for the righteous, for throughout the whole of that mysterious transaction in the cabinet chamber of eternity, when the Father pledged the Son, and the Son pledged the Father, and they entered into covenant engagements one with the other in their mysterious wisdom, every part of those stipulations, every grain of those engagements was made for a sowing of light for the righteous.

And so, beloved, when time had come, when man had fallen, the first promise that was ever spoken sowed light for the righteous. When Jesus Christ was given of the Father, His unspeakable gift, indeed, it was a sowing time of light for the saints, for in Him was light, and the light was the life of men. When the Father begets again unto a lively hope His people by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; when He adopts them into His family and calls them His sons and daughters, when He receives the wanderers into His bosom, and feasts them at the table of His love, then, in all that, light is being sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Ay, and in the steering of the courses of the stars, in the ruling of the winds and tempests, in the government of nations, even in their crash, and in their fall, in the changes of events, and in all that comes from the right hand of the eternal God, light is always being sown by the Great Father for the righteous whom He loves.

A second great Sower was *God the Son*. He sowed happiness for His people when He joined with the Father in covenant and promised to be the substitute for His saints. But the actual sowing took place when He came on earth and sowed Himself in death's dark sepulcher for us. Well did He Himself say, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone, but if it die it brings forth much fruit." He dropped Himself like a priceless seed-corn into the tomb, and what fruit He has brought forth let heaven and all the blood-washed company declare. The flower that springs from His root is immortality and life. Jesus Christ has brought all manner of heavenly things unto His saints, and made them rich to all the intents of bliss, by the sowing of Himself as the life of His people.

Nor must you think that He served us alone, and promoted our happiness only by His stripes and wounds, and bloody sweat, and death, no, beloved, when He rose from the dead, the fact of His resurrection was a preparing and storing up of future blessedness for His redeemed. When He ascended up on high, leading our captivity captive, did He not then scatter gladness for us? And when He received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, did He not accomplish a boundless sowing of light for the elect people? At this moment, standing as He does the High Priest of our profession, pleading before the Majesty of heaven, what are those pleadings but a sowing of happiness for us, a laying up of bliss which we possess today in measure, and shall enjoy hereafter without measure in His presence before the throne?

Beloved, let me remind you that in the government which Christ exercises as Mediator, even as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel, so does the Lord Jesus govern the world for the sake of

His people. In everything that He does He has a design towards His elect ones. He may pause and wait with much long-suffering, bearing long with the ungodly, but in that delaying there is a sowing of light for the elect, every hour of delay shall have its recompense. And when He comes, when the clouds of heaven shall make Him a chariot, and the doors of eternity shall be opened that He may go forth in all the pomp of His glory to judge the earth, then in that day light shall still be sown, and forever and ever while Jesus Christ lives, the friend and patron of His chosen, He shall forever be preparing fresh joy for them that love Him, such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Once more, *the Holy Spirit* is a third great Sower, sowing in another sense, sowing in a sense that comes nearer home to our experience. Light is sown for the righteous by the Holy Spirit. In the hour when He brought the law home with its terrors, and laid us, broken and mangled at the feet of Moses, He was sowing light for us. Our humbling was the preface to our exultation, and we have already proved it so. In that moment when we were subdued, humbled, made to loathe our own righteousness, trampled into the very mire under a sense of weakness and death, He was sowing light for us. We did not know it, we thought that our destruction was near at hand, but oh! those precious drops of penitent tears, those blessed heartaches, what if I had said those priceless broken bones!—out of them has come through Jesus Christ our present joy and peace.

It needed that we should be weaned from self, it was necessary that we should make the terrible discovery of our soul's depravity, and as we passed through all that darkness and gloom of heart, the Holy Ghost was sowing for us our future perfection and glory at the right hand of Christ. Today that Blessed Spirit continues His sowing in us. Every gracious thought, every stroke from the whip of affliction when sanctified, every down-casting of our proud looks, every discovery of our utter insignificance, worthlessness, and death, everything in us that harrows us, cuts us to the quick and wounds us, but yet brings us to the Good Physician that He may exercise His healing art, all these are sowing for us a blessed harvest of light for which we must wait a little while. Be thankful, brethren, for painful inward experiences, when they are most severe they are often most beneficial. Be grateful to God that thus, by His Spirit He is making you fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and in one word is sowing gladness for the upright in heart! Thus I have as well as I could shown you the Sowers.

III. Now I shall occupy a few minutes by inviting you TO GO TO THE FIELD.

God has sown happiness for His saints, but you must recollect it is only sown. You are not to expect to see it grown up while you live this side of the moon. Now where are the fields that we may well say are sown by God's grace with happiness for us? Here is one field—*the field of His Word*. Ah! you may almost see the happiness here. We say the pearl is hidden in this field, but really it gleams upon the very surface. Every promise of God has a secret meaning beyond what we as yet have learned, and that hidden sense is full of happiness for the children of God. Every page here is intended to be for their comfort, for their lasting good, either in the form of instruction, rebuke, or edification. The whole Book as we pass from field to field, and, as it were, climb over one stile and another, lies before us as so many broad and fertile acres, all sown with secret light for believers.

So it is with *providence*. Every event which can occur is sown with light for the faithful. It does not so appear, far rather the fields just now are very unpleasant to look upon, the water stands deep in those broad furrows, you cannot imagine there will ever be a harvest in a land so flooded with trouble, but wait awhile. Providence may look very dark today, but it is full of light—latent light—light which must flash forth as the noonday for brightness. All circumstances are teeming with benefit to you if you be in Christ. Ships with black hulls are bringing you bright gold. Ravens shall bring you meat, and even devils shall be slaves to your service.

There is not a dying child or an ailing wife, there is not a dishonored bill, there is not a wrecked vessel, there is not a burnt house, there is not a single diseased bullock but what you shall see at the last, and perhaps before then, to have been full of real blessedness for you. There is not only mercy in God's dealings with His people in the gross, but in the detail. All the providence of God, far reaching as it is,

and extending from our cradle to our tomb, is full of the divine intent that His children shall be blessed, and blessed they shall be.

You have sometimes read, I daresay, with wonder, that instance of Balaam trying to curse the people of God. He offered his seven bullocks and his seven rams, and went first to one hill and then to another, to look at them from different quarters that he might be able to say a word against them, but every time that mouth of his was compelled to utter a blessing. And it is so with the great enemy of our souls. Sometimes we are tried with poverty, and then he tries to curse us with envy, then we are tried with wealth, and he would curse us with pride, but from whatever quarter of the compass he may endeavor to bring an imprecation upon God's people, the only result shall be their greater blessing, for "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: has he said and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Beloved, the field of the Word, and the field of providence are both sown with light. There is one little field called, "God's Acre," which to some here present appears to be sown with much darkness, but is really sown with light—that sleeping place, the cemetery where your loved ones lie beneath the sod. Yes, but they shall rise again, and so light is sown for you, even in the moldering bones of your beloved children and friends. You would not have it otherwise, would you? Would you lose that seed? Imagine for a moment that it should never come up again from the sepulcher? Would not that grieve you beyond measure? It is your comfort to feel that these dry bones shall live, and all the band of those you loved so dearly who have gone from you for awhile, are not lost, but gone before. "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." And what a happy meeting, what joyous greetings, what blessed reunions, when they meet to part no more! In that, "God's Acre," then, in the many burials we have attended, light is sown for the righteous.

Beloved, light is sown for the righteous, *even upon earth*. I mean there is a glory promised to the church of God even upon this earthly globe. Time shall speed its flight, and the day shall come of the Master's ultimate triumph. The millennial age is certainly foretold, and faithfully covenanted by the promise of God, then the martyr's blood shall be rewarded, then the ashes of the saints shall prove to have been good seed-corn scattered to the winds, but vital in every atom. The day is coming when the monarchs of the earth shall yield their thrones to Jesus, and the gods that now reign over mankind shall be cast away as ignoble things to the moles and to the bats. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the glory of their Father. What will be the bliss of a faithful servant of God at his Master's coming!

It is not mine to give you fancy pictures, but to remind you of those words of the Master, that if we have been faithful in few things, He will make us ruler over many things. We shall be on earth kings and priests unto our God, and shall reign with Him. In the very land of persecution and rebuke, and of slander, and of scorn, the righteous shall put on their crowns, and shall walk in white with their Lord, for they are worthy. Light is sown for the righteous.

But I must ask you now to look beyond your cemeteries, and to look beyond this poor narrow world. What is this earth but a mere speck? Look into *eternity*. Can your minds conceive it? Eternity! Duration without boundary! The whole of that boundless region is sown with light for you. Think of a prairie in America, a sea of grass, think of it all plowed and tilled, and sown with wheat, and all yours! How rich would you be! But what are the prairies compared with the plains of heaven? And what the finest corn compared with heaven's light?

All far away through all the ages of ages, when this world has been consumed with fervent heat, when sun and moon have passed away, like lamps blown out because the night is over, there shall still be an up-springing of never-ending blessedness for you. Eternity is sown with light for you. The Godhead shall be yours with all its infinity ministering to your delights. The Lord Himself shall be your portion, the God of Israel shall be your endless heritage. Brethren, what more can I say? We cannot possibly measure the great fields that are sown for us, so let us thank God and take courage, and go on our way believing that everywhere we have fields already sown, and we must wait awhile before we shall reap the harvest.

IV. The last head is the FUTURE, but it shall occupy only a second or two, as I must close with a practical application.

The *future*. That is always in the farmer's eye when the teams go out to plow, and when the sower's baskets are filled with corn, he thinks of next July or August, and the "Harvest Home," and the going to market with the yellow grain. So ought we always to have our eye upon the future, having respect unto the recompense of the reward. Today is all sowing, but we do not know how soon the reaping will begin. "As the Lord lives," said one, "there is but a step between you and death." And it may be only a step to any of us, for the Lord may descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and may at once begin to reap. But what a reaping! O my soul, what an eternal satisfaction to you to be forever with the Lord! One glimpse of His dear face on earth has ravished you, but what must it be forever without a veil between to gaze into that beloved countenance, and to feel His love shed abroad in your heart, and your heart plunged as into a sea of that love ineffable!

Beloved, it is but a mere film of time that divides us from our expected portion. Those of us who are still young and in hale health should remember, and remember with great satisfaction, that if we are spared for forty years, yet they are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night, while you who are getting grey and have reached your threescore years and ten, may be glad that with you it can be but a few more revolving moons, the passing away of a few more Sabbath days, and you shall be forever with the Lord. Come, come, murmur not, if the inn be not as comfortable as flesh desires, you are not to tarry long in it, you are on your journey home, and the cry is, "Up and away." What if the way be rough, your face is turned Zionward. The road cannot be long, so smooth it with hope and cheer it with song. You are not like those unhappy creatures, some of whom are present here, whose life has been a sowing of darkness. They have leagues of thistles to reap, acres upon acres of briers and thorns of which they will have to make their bed forever. They have been sowing the wind, and they will have to reap the whirlwind, which will carry their guilty souls forever in its dreadful tornadoes.

O you who have never had light sown for you because you have never sought mercy through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has never renewed your hearts and made you righteous, think of what your fate will be! You will be like the farmer who sowed not in the seed-time, and therefore reaps not in the time of harvest. Naked, and poor, and miserable, destitute, and forsaken, you will beg in harvest, but you shall have nothing. You will ask God then to have mercy upon you, but He will refuse you. You will clamor for the benefits of His grace, but they shall be denied you, for He will not hear you when once life is over. If we hear Him not today, neither will He hear us tomorrow. O for grace to have a seed-sowing here, that we may have a reaping forever and ever!

I shall close by observing that the doctrine of our text ought to be very, very comforting to all of us who are in Christ. Sufferer, your pains are sharp, bear them manfully and repine not, for there is light springing up for you. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Poor man, working hard for a little, with many wants and sufferings, light is sown for you. You shall soon dwell in the city of the many mansions, you shall walk the golden streets of the pearly-gated city, where poverty is banished for aye. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

Slandered one, whose name is cast out as evil for Christ's sake, bear it with rejoicing, light is sown for you. Amidst the martyrs and the throng of the chosen who suffered for righteousness' sake, you shall reap the sheaves of glory—reap them world without end.

And you who have to suffer more than slander, who lose friend and home for Christ's sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you, those ancient witnesses have reaped the light, and are reaping it, and even so shall you when worlds shall pass away. The Lord give us to forget the present, to rejoice in the future, and to count the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALMS 92, 94.

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