

SOLOMON'S PLEA NO. 1232

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 2, 1875,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For You did separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Your inheritance”
1 Kings 8:53.*

ISRAEL was a type of the Church of God. The Apostle, in the Epistle to the Romans, clearly shows that Abraham was the father, not of the circumcision only, but of all those who walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham, and that the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. The covenanted inheritance was not to be given according to descent through the flesh, else would the inheritance have fallen to Ishmael, but the peculiar blessings which God promised to Abraham are the heritage of those who are born after the Spirit, according to the promise, even as Isaac was. Abraham, himself, believed, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness, and all those who possess faith are the true children of “the father of the faithful.”

We may, therefore, without any violence, apply what is said of ancient Israel to the present people of God. The promises which were made to the great Patriarch had an eye to us, “as it is written, I have made you a father of many nations,” and, “the promise is sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham” (Rom. 4:16, 17). “The children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9:8), and of them the children of the flesh, namely, the Jews, are but a type. We shall not err, then, in applying this prayer of Solomon to the people of God at the present time.

It is worthy of remark concerning this prayer that it is as full and comprehensive as if it were meant to be the summary of all future prayers offered in the temple. One is struck, moreover, with the fact that the language is far from new and is full of quotations from the Pentateuch, some of which are almost word for word, while the sense of the whole may be found in those memorable passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy in which the Lord threatened His people that if they were untrue to Him, He would visit them with heavy chastisements. And, in which He also added that if they turned to Him with sincere repentance and confessed their iniquities, He would smile upon them again and deliver them.

Solomon was certainly able to have found words of his own, for the royal preacher was wise and sought out acceptable words. Yet he preferred the words of the Holy Spirit to his own. In prayer there is a peculiar sweetness in being able to bring before God not only His own meaning, but His own Words! “Remember the Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope.” No language has such a mystic charm and solemn power about it as that employed by the Holy Spirit. “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” When we spread the very Words of the Lord before Him, our mind is conscious of great power in asking—and much assurance of receiving.

The expressions by which the Spirit teaches us are very comely when we return them to Him in supplication. By the illumination of the Spirit of God much more is to be seen in Solomon's prayer than may be apparent upon the surface. The chief point to which I shall call your attention at this time will be its concluding plea which he repeats in various forms, saying, “For they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron.” And again in the words of the text, “For You did separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Your inheritance, as You spoke by the hand of Moses, Your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt.”

The Lord's choice of Israel, His past mercies towards the elect people and His peculiar relationship to them above all other nations—these were the pleas which the suppliant son of David laid before the Covenant God. Three things, then, this morning. The first is *the fact*, “You have separated them from among all people.” The second is *the design*, “to be Your inheritance.” And the third is *the plea*, which is fitly based thereon. We shall try to work out the plea in reference to the various petitions of Solomon's prayer, for they comprehend most, if not all, of the trials of the godly.

I. First, here is THE FACT. "You did separate them from among all the people of the earth." The historical Books of Scripture show that this was emphatically true of Abraham and his descendants. Balaam spoke the truth when he said, "Lo, the people shall dwell *alone*, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Israel never prospered when it forgot its separateness, for the promise was, "Israel then shall dwell in safety *alone*." When they followed the customs of their neighbors, they had bitter cause for lamentation. But all things went well when they remembered how the Lord had said, "You shall be holy unto Me, for I, the Lord, am holy; and have severed you from other people that you should be Mine."

Israel's safety and glory lay in being distinct from all other people—and that Truth of God holds good concerning the Church of God at this day, for we, also, are not of this world! In the human race there are many divisions—nationalities, races and the like—but these are only like the marks of a plow upon the surface of a field, they do not divide. There is a far deeper and more lasting division which God, Himself, has made. All around us is the world's wide wilderness and yonder is the spot enclosed by Grace which the Lord of All has set apart to be His garden. Before us lies the great and troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. But we also see the Rock on which He has built His Church, which God has settled and made to stand fast by His eternal power.

Gross darkness covers the earth, for the whole world lies in the Wicked One. But in the land of Goshen there is Light, for upon those that fear His name the Sun of Righteousness has arisen. This separation of the world into two races was predicted when our first parents fell. At the gates of the Garden of Eden the Voice of the Lord spoke concerning the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between whom an enmity was to be placed. From that day until this, the serpent's seed has continued in direct lineal descent and, blessed be God, the Seed of the woman has not failed from off the face of the earth, for God's infinite Grace has evermore raised up children in the family of Grace. The two lines of Cain and Seth, of Ham and Shem, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob are very visible from the first hour of history until now.

There is a separation, then. Let us speak of it. That separation *commenced in the eternal purpose of God*. Before the earth was, He had set apart unto Himself a people whom He looked upon in the glass of His foreknowledge and viewed with infinite affection. "Moreover whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Think not that God's children are born into His family by chance, for, when they are born again, they do but receive "that eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Conceive not that the newly converted ones are strangers to Him—He has known them long before they knew themselves! And He has shed abroad upon them "that great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins."

We may say of the mystical body of Christ that in the Lord's Book all His members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them! Long before He had made the world in which men should dwell, He had ordained a place for His people and the arrangements of Providence were made with an eye to them, for Moses says, "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

This first act of separation was followed up, or I might say, accompanied, by a distinct act of Grace in which *the chosen were given over to the Lord Jesus Christ*. "Yours they were," says Jesus, "and You gave them to Me." He speaks of as many as His Father gave Him—these were to be members of Christ's body, they were to make up His bride, the Lamb's wife—they were to be His brethren and He the Firstborn. They were to be taken under a federal headship of which He should be the second Adam. "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Oh, what a blessing this is to be the chosen of God and given to the Lord Jesus—to have one's name written in the Lamb's Book of Life—that book in which the Lamb's name stands first and is followed by the names of all whom He has redeemed with His precious blood!

O bliss, eternal and boundless, to know by assurance of faith that you belong to those who are set apart unto God, and are one with Jesus! So far the separation is hidden from us, but what is hidden in the purpose, in due time develops itself into the event, for all the people of God are at the proper moment *called out by effectual calling*, and in this way they are separated from among the people of the world. They hear a voice which others hear not! Their eyes are opened to see what others perceive not! Drawn by cords which others do not feel, they yield to those bands of love which others resist. With full consent, their will being sweetly influenced, they follow as they are drawn! Like Abraham, they go forth from the country of their birth to seek a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

The Most High has called them to come forth and be sojourners with Him, and they come. Do you not remember, Brothers and Sisters, when first the sacred Voice sounded in your inner ears? It said, "You are in a far country, My child. You are poor and hungry. You are sick and faint. You are feeding swine. You are disgraced and dishonored. Come back to your Father's house." Well do I remember how that Voice charmed me to consideration, to humiliation, to confession and to resolve until my heart cried out, "I will arise and go unto my Father." Did not Jesus say, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"? And did He not say to others, "You believe not because you are not of My sheep"?

Here begins the separation which is visible and manifest! Grace works and calls the chosen out of Nature's lost estate. At the call of the Almighty Spirit, dead souls arise to Divine life and forsake the tombs among which they wandered! Lepers find their flesh returning to its former health and quit the lazar house in which they dwelt! And rebels, flinging down their weapons, sue for peace and become loyal subjects of their gracious King! Do you know, Beloved, what this means? It is what we call *conversion*. It is a wonderful phenomenon—who shall understand it? Let no man dare to ridicule it! There is a mock conversion which arises from a little feverish *feeling* which turns cold when the fit is over—but this is no evidence that there are no true conversions.

Real conversion by the Holy Spirit is as distinct and radical a change as though an old man were placed in a mill and ground young again! No, it is something more than that would be, for "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The regenerate are dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ! In them has been performed a deed of the same power which worked in Christ when He was raised from the dead—and this has most effectually put a difference between them and the rest of mankind! Believers become separate from the hour of their conversion by *possessing a new nature*. Do not think I am too bold when I say that the distinction between the child of God and the carnal man is as great as the difference between a man and a beast! As man possesses an intellectual life which is denied to the beast, so the regenerate are endowed with a third and loftier principle called the *spirit*, which lifts them into a higher sphere of existence.

The most moral and most educated of unregenerate men are still dead as to spiritual things—and they must remain so till the new life is implanted in them. Those who have been born again have received the living and incorruptible Seed of God which abides forever. They have, in the words of the Apostle, been "made partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." This makes a wonderful distinction between them and the rest of mankind. A man is separate from an ox or a sheep by every instinct of his nature—there is no mistaking the one for the other. True, there are parts of manhood which have affinity with the animal, but still the possession of a mind creates tastes, desires, emotions, joys, sorrows, cravings and motives with which the animal cannot intermeddle.

The Christian man is endowed with a nature above that of other men and is conscious of a life with which they cannot sympathize. Dear Hearer, do you know anything of this deep, vital, radical, essential distinction from the world? You must know it, or you cannot belong to Christ, for He says of His disciples, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." *The separateness of the Believer comes out in his life*. We shall do well to call to mind that the Jews were remarkably separated from the Gentiles by the ordinances and commandments which the Lord gave them. If they sat down to eat they could not mingle with the heathen, for they were discriminating in their food—the Lord had said to them, "You shall, therefore, put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean food and clean: and you shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean."

If the Jew went out to fish, some of the fish were without scales and fins—and these were unclean to him—and the Jewish fisherman was thus distinct from the Gentile. Or, if he became a fowler, some of the birds which might be taken were unclean, and so the Israelite was detected again. Not alone in his food, but in his dress, also, he was a marked man, for the Lord had commanded, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribbon of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." It did not matter where he was, whether he ate, drank, slept, walked, rode—there was such a distinction about the man, that, with a little observation, you could safely say, "that man is an Israelite."

Even thus should it be with the Lord's people. I do not mean that we are to use cant phrases, or set up distinctive trademarks as certain of the sects are doing. Behold how broad they make their phylacteries! One sort can do nothing without the "sign of the cross," and another cannot be happy except they exhibit the orthodox formula—"The Gospel of the Grace of God will be preached here, God willing." How readily does the most simple worship fix itself down to *form* and become as ritualistic without rituals as others with a superabundance of ceremonies! A broad brimmed hat and a collarless coat were once brave protests against wide-spread folly. And they may be well enough, even now, if worn in a right spirit. But still the distinction between saint and sinner can never lie in beaver and broadcloth, nor can it be revealed by mere peculiarities of speech—it needs other and more important modes of manifestation.

We do not believe the Lord would have us become unnatural. The Grace of God has left us men and intends us to be men, though it has quickened us with a higher life and actuated us with nobler motives. Not John the Baptist in the wilderness, but Jesus among men, is the example of our lives! We are to be in the world but not of it! Grave distinctions are to mark us. A worldling loves himself—the Christian loves his God. The worldling seeks gain for self—the Christian seeks glory for God. The worldling lives to bless himself—the Christian lives to bless his age. If the love of God is in a man, he will, in motive and spirit, differ as much from the ungodly as light from darkness—and in his life you will see the difference with the naked eye. The saints are a peculiar people and this is their main peculiarity—they are zealous for good works—not to save them, but because they *are saved!*

Dear Brethren, it is to be feared that many of us are not separated enough from the world. God intends the difference to be very marked. He would have the line between the Church and the world drawn very clearly. I could wish to obliterate forever the unhappy and artificial distinction which is constantly made between sacred and secular, for a world of mischief has come out of it. The Truth of God is that a real Christian may be known by this—that to him *everything* secular is *sacred* and the most common matters are holiness unto the Lord! I do not believe in the religion which only lifts its head above water on Sunday and confines itself to praying and preaching and carrying hymn books about.

We must have a religion which gives a true yard when it is measuring its calico, a religion which weighs a true pound when it is dealing out shop goods, a religion which scorns to puff and lie and take advantage of a gullible public. We must have a religion which is true, upright, chaste, kind and unselfish. Give me a man who would not lie if the whole earth or Heaven, itself, were to be won thereby! We need among professed Christians a high morality—no, far more—we need unsullied holiness! O, Holy Spirit, work it in all of us!

As we have often said, holiness means wholeness of character in contradistinction to the cultivation of some few virtues and the neglect of others. Oh that we were like the Lord in this—that we loved only that which is right and abhorred that which is evil! If only we kept along the straight and narrow path and could not be decoyed from it, fearing not the frown of man nor courting his smile, but resolved, as God lives in us, that we will live in our daily actions according to His will! This would make Christians to be a separated people, indeed, and this is precisely what their God would have them to be!

There shall be a *final separation*, by-and-by, when the wheat shall be gathered into the garner and the tares cast into the oven—when the Great Shepherd shall come and set His sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left. O, in that day of final separation, may we be found among those of whom He has said, "They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels."

II. Now, secondly and briefly, as to THE DESIGN. What has the Lord aimed at by separating His people from among men? The text tells us, "*to be Your inheritance.*" God has made a choice of a people who are to be called, "the Lord's portion." They are to be "the lot of His inheritance," by which is meant *that He would have a peculiar interest in them*. All the world belongs to God—"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein," yet out of the mass He has chosen His own, of whom He says, "You, only, have I known of all the nations of the earth."

The Queen of England may traverse the whole of these islands and say, "All this is mine," but yet there are spots which are, in a deeper sense, her own inheritance. Windsor is the home of her ancestors and Balmoral and Osborne are also hers, as Blair Athol and Ventnor are not. Jehovah claims all men as His—"All souls are Mine, says the Lord," but He singles out some and says, "I know whom I have chosen." "It has pleased the Lord to make you His people." "Blessed is the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance." A man, when he takes anything to be his inheritance, expects

to have it *used for his own purposes*. If he has inherited a farm he looks to receive the rents of it, or if he tills the ground, himself, he rightfully considers that the crops belong to him.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, if we are the Lord's *inheritance*, all that we are capable of producing belongs to Him, and He looks to have it. To Him every power, every faculty, every passion, every ability, yes, even life itself, belongs to Him. All the clusters of our vine are His and His each ear of our nature's harvest. We are vessels unto honor, reserved only for His use. We are His servants whose sole and only business it is to wait upon Him. We dare not look upon ourselves as our own, or as belonging unto others, for we are bought with a price! And therefore it is but reasonable that we serve the Lord in our bodies and our spirits, which are His.

A man will generally *take up his abode* in the spot which he has selected to be especially his own. "For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them," says the Lord. Blessed is that man with whom Jehovah deigns to dwell! Will He, in very deed, dwell upon earth? He will, for He has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word." In a man's inheritance *he takes his delight*, and oh, we mention it with joyful awe—Jehovah takes delight in His people! "The Lord your God, in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing."

It is said of Him who is the Incarnate Wisdom, "My delights were with the sons of men." So does He love us that He rejoices over us—and when we know that His joy is fulfilled in us then our joy is full! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, see the honor which is put upon you by being made the delight of the Lord! When a man takes a portion to be his inheritance he means *never to give it up*. A Jew never yielded his inheritance. Poor Naboth had a little vineyard and Ahab wanted it and, therefore, he said—"I will give you the worth of it in money, or I will give you a better vineyard." "No," said Naboth, "the Lord forbid it that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you." And he died sooner than alienate his heritage! Beloved, *you* are the inheritance of God! You are the Lord's own portion! Sooner than give you up, the Only-Begotten shed His heart's blood! You are His and He will not lose you. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?"

Now, before I go further, I want to ask, have we realized our separated condition and our being wholly the Lord's? Certain regiments in the army count it a great honor to be called the Queen's Own. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what an honor to be God's own, to be Jesus Christ's own! I would like to be the branded slave of Christ, like Paul, who, when he looked upon the scars which commemorated his sufferings said, "Let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if these were the brands never to be erased which marked him forever as belonging to the Crucified Savior! If you and I belong to Jesus, let us never be false to Him. Let us never be ashamed of His service, nor negligent in it. Such an honor as we possess must not be trifled with.

What manner of persons ought we to be? Brothers and Sisters, are you living for God? May I press the question home upon you? You profess to have been born into His family, are you seeking to glorify God as the main object of life? You may have other objects, but they must be secondary to this. This must eat you up! It must be like fire in your bones. You must feel, "For me to live is Christ." An old Divine said, "I desire to eat, drink and sleep eternal life." Let us be wholly consecrated, for the Lord's portion must not be spoiled! The King's private garden must not be trod under the stranger's foot. His bride must not be for others.

Brethren, you cannot but joyfully confess that you are the Lord's! Yes, you delight to have it so and desire to make the Lord's possession of you more and more manifest—go on unto perfection. There is no happiness comparable to a complete submergence of self into the Glory of God. This is the nearest approach to Heaven this side of the grave! O, to be reserved for the Lord, hedged round about, shut up and enclosed for Jesus and for Him alone!

III. Thirdly, the subject before us furnishes us with A PLEA. If you have realized that you are separated to belong to the Lord, this is a plea—and the plea applies in prayer to all your trials. As time would fail me, I shall not read all the words of Solomon, but I will ask you to notice that from the 31st verse he pleads for any who may have a case pending in judgment. It happens that righteous men are *falsely accused*. Solomon asks that God would decide the case and give forth His sentence and establish the right.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, perhaps some of you are under the peculiarly severe trial of being misunderstood, misrepresented and misjudged. You have not been guilty of that which is laid at your door. You loathe from your very heart the

evil which is attributed to you. Now, if you are the Lord's own, you may go to Him with this argument—your Savior has put it into your mouth—“And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?” Be not very sorely troubled when men falsely speak evil against you, for they so persecuted the Prophets that were before you. Your reputation may be dead and buried, but, if you have not killed it by your own conduct, it will have a resurrection! And when it rises, again, it will be much more fair and beautiful than it was before.

“Light sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Do not believe that the good man's sun has set, for it is written, “Your righteousness shall come forth as the light, and your judgment as the noon-day.” Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for He will do you justice in due time, for you are His own, and He will not forget you. I think this is good pleading—surely God will defend His own! Then Solomon goes on to speak, at verse 33, of those who had suffered *defeat*, and there may be some present who have passed through this experience. “When Your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against You, and shall turn to You, and pray and make supplication to You, then hear You in Heaven.”

He speaks of, “Your people Israel,” so that it seems a man may be a true Israelite and yet be defeated by the foe. Perhaps you have been struggling against an error and the advocate of that error is more clever in the use of his weapons than you are, and has gained an apparent advantage over you. Fear not, dear Brother, if you are God's servant, you shall have victory! Perhaps some failing in your spirit while pleading for the Truth has baffled you. Go to God and confess it. And then return to the war. God will help you. Perhaps you have been struggling against some besetting sin and, as yet, you fear you have been overcome. Say unto the dragon, “I shall yet defeat you, Rahab. Were you not wounded at the Red Sea? Behold, the Lord will yet enable me to cut you in pieces. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise again.”

O you people of God, who have been defeated by Satan in your attempts to teach the infidel, the scoffer, or the Ritualist—go to the Strong for strength—and cry unto the Lord, “Am I not Your own servant? Did I not do this for Your cause? Did I not seek Your honor?” And assuredly you shall have an answer of peace and you shall yet conquer. Solomon then proceeded to speak of *barrenness* and the absence of the dew and the rain, a fearful calamity in Judea, for if the rain did not fall there could be no gladsome weeks of harvest. At times, Brothers and Sisters, we, also, are without the heavenly rain—God's Spirit is withheld and our hearts become dry as the desert sand. Do any of you suffer from spiritual drought this morning? Do you feel as if you had no sap left in you?

Those of us who search our own hearts, experience seasons when we can scarcely find a trace of Grace, except that we do long after Grace and do certainly rest in Jesus Christ if we rest anywhere. I believe that even those of God's children who live nearest to Him sometimes undergo spiritual drought. They cry unto God for help, but help does not immediately come. At such times they may come, each one, with the plea, “Save me, O Lord, for I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid! You have loosed my bonds. I am Yours, quicken me. You bid dew fall on the grass and You give each blade of grass its own drop. And yet the grass cannot pray as You have taught my soul to do. Come, Lord, give me the dew for which You have made me cry with eagerness of desire. O, by the desire which You could not have created in order to tantalize me, I pray You, hear me and let Your Spirit come upon me.” This is good pleading.

“If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.” You ask of a father and he gives to you as his child. You may ask peculiar gifts because you stand in a peculiar relationship. Brother, do you belong to some decaying Church? Do you come up here, today, to be refreshed, and are you saying, “Our Church is very dry and barren.” Go and plead with the Lord and say, “This is Your Church, Lord, and though the members have grown very slothful and seem to be indifferent about sinners, they are still Your people, therefore look upon them and revive them again. Will You not visit us again, for we are Your people? Revive us, we pray You, and send upon us the showers in their season.”

Solomon further uses this plea in connection with *chastisements*, giving a long list of them. “If there is pestilence, blasphemy, mildew, locusts, caterpillars” and the like. Beloved, you may be under some chastisement, today, on account of sin. “What son is there whom his father chastises not?” O how some of us have had to learn the meaning of those words, but blessed be God we have not had to ponder over that other dreadful verse, “If you are without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons.” Know you not what the smarting rod means? At such times when the rod falls again and again it is well to turn your eyes upward and say, “Father, am I not Your child? Are

You sitting as a Judge? Will You smite me with the blows of a cruel one, as though You hate me? My God, it cannot be for I am Your own—

*Gently, gently lay Your rod
On my sinful head O God;
Stay Your wrath, in mercy stay,
Lest I sink beneath its sway.*

“I am Yours, You know I am! Have compassion on the offspring of Your own eternal love! Look down with favor on me, whose name is sculptured on the heart of Jesus, The Well-Beloved. O, do not crush me, do not utterly destroy me! Truly, I deserve Your utmost wrath, but by Your ancient affection when You did appear of old unto me and say, ‘Lo, I have loved you with an everlasting love,’ put up Your rod, and restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.” I am not telling you, now, what I do not know. How many times I have pleaded just like that with God!! And sometimes I have even made bold to say to Him, when pain was sharp and the mind was weary, “I would not thus chastise *my* child, and O, my Father, will You be a less tender Father toward me than I am?” Being bold like this I have often obtained an answer of peace from His hands, and even felt physical pain relieved, while spiritual distress has been swept away.

This is Solomon's argument—“Are they not Your people? Have You not separated them? Be not angry with Your inheritance!” This is equally good pleading if we come to the next point—which is *warfare*, for Solomon says, “If Your people go out to battle against the enemy, where ever You shall send them.” Brethren, our life is warfare. There is a convict within and there is a warfare to be carried on outside—at this very hour we hear the trumpet sounding for an earnest assault upon the iniquities of London—and if we wish to plead for a blessing, this may serve us—“Lord, are we not Your people? Is not this Your Gospel? Is not Jesus Christ Your Son? Is not this Your cause? For if it is, then, O Lord, go forth with us! If we are mistaken and the Gospel is not Your Truth, and if we are not Your servants, then we wish that our cause should sink, for we would not fight against You. If we are Yours, O remember us and now, even now, send prosperity for Jesus' sake.” You may plead thus, and you shall be heard.

Again, Solomon prayed for any, who through their sins, were carried into *captivity*. Some here may be in that state. Brother, you were once a member of this Church, but you have been put away for your unseemly conduct. Sister, you once walked in the Light of God's Countenance, but it is many a day since you have seen the gleaming of the Savior's face, for you have behaved strangely towards your best Beloved. Well, now, notwithstanding all this, your Lord says, “Return, you backsliding children.” It is a wonderful thing, that even if you have been a prodigal, and have spent your living with harlots, yet if you are His child you may call Him, “Father.”

Did not the prodigal say, “Father, I have sinned”? There is good pleading in this fact, for you are not disowned, even by your sin! If you are a child of God you are a child of God and always will be, for it is not possible that the relationship of son-ship should come to an end. Alas, our children may bring grave dishonor upon us and we may cry over them, “O Absalom, my son, my son,” but even Absalom is still acknowledged as David's *son*, and must be. And, therefore, O Backslider, you are still the Lord's child! Come back, I pray you, and ask to be delivered from your captivity.

I have but one thing more to say. I hear a mourner cry, “This sermon is very consolatory for the people of God, but what about us? Some of us do not belong to the separated ones. Are you going to send us away without a word?” Oh no! What did Solomon say in *his* prayer? His prayer was all for Israel, was it not? Well, yes, but I will read you a little piece of it. Just listen. See if it suits you. “Moreover concerning a stranger that is not of Your people Israel, but comes out of a far country for Your name's sake. For they shall hear of Your great name and of Your strong hand, and of Your stretched out arm. When he shall come and pray toward this house, hear You in Heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calls to You for: that all people of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as do Your people Israel.”

That is a prayer for strangers! Stranger, where are you? Stranger to yourself, stranger to Christ and a stranger to His people—have you come here this morning among the people of God? What has brought you? Have you come from a far country? Are you far off from God by wicked works? Is there something in your breast which makes you long to draw near? Stranger, have you heard that Christ has been saving thousands of late, and do you want Him to save you? Stranger, have you a relative who has lately passed from death to life, and do you want to know that saving change yourself? Stranger, has your mother gone to Heaven? Has some beloved child been borne away to sing like a seraph beyond the stars? And do these things tempt *you* to desire to know more about the great Redeemer?

You are welcome! O, so welcome, not to this Tabernacle merely, but to Jesus and to His heart of love! Stranger, utter your heart's desire. Ask of the Lord great things, for whatever you shall ask believingly, you shall receive! The Queen of Sheba was not sent away empty-handed by Solomon and you shall not be sent away hungry by Jesus Christ the Lord! Breathe your prayer now. Do you want pardon? Ask for it now! Would you be saved? Pray for salvation *now*, for the Lord will certainly hear you! Let this be the plea, the plea which Solomon gives us—that God's name may be known and glorified to the very ends of the earth! For if the Lord will but save you, I guarantee you, you will never let Him hear the last of it, for you will tell of His Grace to everybody as long as you live!

The Lord will bless you if you plead His Grace in Christ Jesus. Say, "Lord, there is no reason why I should be saved, except this, that if You will save me it will greatly glorify Your mercy. Surely, if ever I get to Heaven, the glorified ones will stand surprised and hold up their hands, and say, 'How came you in here?' Lord, if You will but make me a changed man, the people of my parish will marvel greatly, and say, 'What has God worked!' Therefore do it and be glorified thereby!"

I have an impression upon me that there are persons here, this morning, who are very unlikely ever to be converted, and I pray the Lord that these very men may begin to seek His face. If they do so they may plead in this wise—"Lord, because I judge myself to be the least likely to be saved, and because others judge me to be so, do be pleased to perform a wonder of Grace this morning! Lord, it is nothing to put tame doves on Your finger and teach them to peck from Your lips—this is what *saints* do. But Lord, if You will lure a wild bird like me and tame me to Your will, You will be renowned, indeed! To lead a lamb by a string as You lead Your gentle children, Lord, is not so hard a thing. But I am as a raging lion, or a hungry wolf! O that Your Sovereign Grace would transform *me* into a lamb—then will Your mercy appear glorious, indeed!"

Plead thus, O Sinner, and at the same time look unto Jesus Christ, and you shall find salvation, to the praise of the glory of His Grace! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Kings 8:22-53.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—47, 195, 106 (PART II).

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