

WHERE IS THE LORD? NO. 2258

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.”
Isaiah 63:11-14.

I told you, in the reading, that Israel had a golden age, a time of great familiarity with God, when Jehovah was very near to His people in their sufferings and was afflicted in their affliction—when He helped them in everything they did and the Angel of His Presence saved them. But after all that the Lord had done for them, there came a cold period. The people went astray from the one living and true God. They fell into the ritualism of the golden calf. They must have something *visible*, something that they could see and worship. Even after they were brought into the Promised Land and the Lord had worked great wonders for them, they turned aside to false gods till they worshipped strange deities that were no gods and provoked Jehovah to jealousy. “They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them.” Not that He ceased to love His chosen, but He must be just and He could not patronize sin—so He sent their enemies against them and they were sorely smitten, and brought very low. Then it was that they began to remember the days of old and to sigh for Him whom they had treated so evilly. And they said, one to another, “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people to make Yourself a glorious name.”

I have but a short time, as the Communion Service is to follow and, therefore, I must leave much unsaid that I think your own imagination will make up to you at home.

But I shall ask you to notice, first, that the text contains *a sacred, loving remembrance*. It dwells very much upon what God did in the old times, when He was familiar with His people and they walked in the light of His Countenance. After that, I shall call your attention to *an object clearly shining* in the text. We get it twice over. In the 12th verse we read, “To make Himself an everlasting name.” In the 14th verse, “To make Yourself a glorious name.” When I have spoken of those two things, I shall dwell more at length upon *an anxious enquiry*, which is put here twice—“Where is He?” In the 11th verse you get this repeated question, “Where is He? Where is He?”

I. So then, to begin with, we go back to God's dealings with His people and with us—and we have A SACRED, LOVING REMEMBRANCE. The people remembered what God did to them. What was it? As it is here described, He, first of all, *gave them leaders*. “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?” Moses and Aaron, and a band of godly men who were with them, were the leaders of the people through the sea and through the wilderness. Brothers and Sisters, we are apt to think too little of our leaders! First of all we think too much of them and afterwards we think too little of them. We seem to swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. Man is reckoned as

if he were everything to some and God becomes nothing to such, but, without unduly exalting man, we can truly say that it really is a great blessing to the Church when God raises up men who are qualified to lead His people.

Israel did not go out of Egypt as a mob—they were led out by their armies. They did not plunge into the Red Sea as an undisciplined crowd, but Moses stood up there with his uplifted rod and led them on that memorable day. We may as well sigh for the glorious days of old when God gave His people mighty preachers of His Word. There have been epochs in history that were prolific of great leaders of the Christian Church. No sooner did Luther give his clarion call, than God seemed to have a bird in every bush—and Calvin, and Farel, and Melancthon, and Zwingli and so many besides that I will not attempt to make out the list—joined with him in his brave protest against the harlot Church of Rome. “The Lord gave the Word: and great was the company of those that published it.” The Church remembers those happy days, with earnest longing for their return! They were giants in those days—mighty men of renown—well fitted *by the Lord* to lead His people.

We are next told that God *put His spirit within these shepherds*. They would have been nothing without it. Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within them? A man with God’s Holy Spirit within him—can anybody estimate his worth? God says that He will make a man more precious than the gold of Ophir, but, to a man filled with His Spirit, mines of rubies or of diamonds cannot be set in comparison! When the 11 Apostles went forth on the day of Pentecost, endowed by the Spirit of God, there were forces in the world whose very marching might make it quiver beneath their feet! God send us once more many of His servants, within whom He has put His Spirit in an eminent and conspicuous manner, and then we shall see bright days, indeed! The command to such is still, “Tarry until you be endued with power from on high.”

Then there was, in the next place, as a happy memory for the Church, *a great manifestation of the Divine Power*. “That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name.” “The right hand of Moses,” by itself, was no more than your right hand or mine! But when God’s glorious arm worked by the right hand of Moses, the sea divided and made a way for the hosts of Israel to pass over! As the Psalmist sings, “He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and He made the waters to stand as a heap.” The right hand of Moses could not have worked that miracle! But the glorious arm of the Lord did. What we need today, Brothers and Sisters, is a manifestation of Divine Power! Some of us are praying for it day and night. We have expected it. We *do* expect it! We are longing for it with an insatiable hunger and thirst. Oh, when will Jehovah pluck His right hand out of His bosom? When will He make bare His arm, as one that goes to His work with might and main? Pray, O you servants of God, for leaders filled with the Spirit and with the power of God working with them, that multitudes may be converted unto Christ and the sea of sin be dried up in the advance of His Kingdom!

Then, there came to God’s people *a very marvelous deliverance*—“That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble.” Understand by the word, “wilderness,” here, an expansive grassy plain—a place of wild grass and herbs, for so it means. And as a horse is led where it is flat and level and he does not stumble, so were the hosts of Israel led through the Red Sea. The bottom of the sea may be stony or gravelly, or it may be full of mire and mud. Probably there will be huge rocks standing up in the middle of the stream. There may be a sudden fall from one stratum of rock to the other—and to come up from the sea on the further bank would be hard work for struggling people carrying burdens, as these Israelites did—for they went out of Egypt harnessed and laden, bearing their kneading troughs in their clothes upon their shoulders. But God made that rough sea bottom to be as easy traveling for them as when a horse is led across a flowery meadow! Beloved, God has done so with His Church in all time. Her seas of difficulty have had no difficulty about them. He has come in all the Glory of His power and smoothed the way for the ransomed to pass over. Has it not been so with you, my Brothers and Sisters?

And, as a blessed ending to their trials, God *brought them into a place of rest*—“As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord causes him to rest: so did You lead Your people.” In the desert they rested a good deal, but in Canaan they rested altogether. As the cattle come down from the mountains where they have been picking up their food, when the plains are fat with grass, and they feed to their full, and lie down and rest, so did God deal with His people, bringing them from all the mountains of their trouble into a sweet valley, a land that flowed with milk and honey, where they might rest. This is a memorial, a sketch of the past.

I read it, first, literally as a sketch of Israel's history. I read it, next, as a sketch of the Church's history. There have been times with the Church as at Pentecost and the Reformation, when, though she had wandered, God returned to her, made bare His arm, raised up shepherds, put His Spirit upon them and then led His people straight ahead through every difficulty and gave them rest. You are, most of you, acquainted with the history of the period before Luther's day. It did not seem likely, then, that the Gospel would be preached everywhere throughout Northern Europe, but it was so, and God singularly preserved the first Reformers' lives when they were very precious. Zwingli died in battle, but he should not have been fighting, and he might have died a natural death. But Calvin, Luther and the rest of them, for the most part, remained until their work was done and then quietly passed away. And the Churches, despite long persecution, had comparative rest. It was so here and it was so across the border in our sister Church of Scotland. She cannot forget the covenanting blood and the putting to death of those who were for the Crown Rights of King Jesus, but, at last, she had her time of rest. Time would fail me to tell you the long list of shepherds that God gave to His covenanting Church, the mighty men who, being dead, yet speak to us by their works and who, while they lived, made the Church of God in Scotland to be glorious with the Presence of her Lord!

Well now, the same thing has happened also to us as individuals! We have had our cloudy and dark days, but God has appeared for our help. Some of you could tell how God led you through the deep as through a prairie. You went a way that you never knew, a new way, an untrod path, as though it were the bottom of a sea but newly dry—but the Lord led you as a groom leads a horse, so that you did not stumble—and before long you came up out of the depths unharmed! With Moses and the children of Israel, you sang the praises of Him who had triumphed gloriously. And then you began to learn another song, not so martial, but very sweet—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." In conflicts for the God of Israel and His everlasting Truth, some of us have been counted as the mire of the streets—but in that we rejoice, and will rejoice—for Jehovah lives and He will bring up His people again from Bashan! He will bring them up from the depths of the sea and there shall be rest, again, in the midst of Israel, if men are but faithful to God and faithful to His Truth.

Thus much upon the sacred memory of the past.

II. But now, in the second place, I want you to notice AN OBJECT CLEARLY SHINING, like the morning star. I see, through the text, God's great motive in working these wonders for His people. *It was God who did it all*—my text is full of God. He brought them up out of the sea. He put His Holy Spirit within them. He led them with His glorious arm. He led them through the deep. He caused them to rest. He did it all! When the history of the Church is written, there will be nothing on the page but God. I know that her sin is recorded, but He has blotted that out and, at the end, there will remain nothing but what God has done. When your life and mine shall ring out as a Psalm amid the harps of Glory, it will be only, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us, be glory and dominion forever and ever." "*Non nobis, Domine.*" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." So will sing all of us who are the Lord's redeemed, when we have come up out of the great tribulation and have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

But then, why had God done all this? Did He do it because of His people's merits, or numbers, or capacities? He tells them, many a time, "Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." God finds in Himself the motive for blessing men who have no merits. If God looked for any motive in us, He would find none. He would see in us many reasons why He should condemn us, but only in Himself could He discover the motive for His matchless mercy.

God works His great wonders of Grace with the high motive of *making known to His creatures His own Glory*, manifesting what He is and who He is, that they may worship Him. He tells us in the text that He "led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name." So He has done, for to this day the highest note of praise to God that we know of is the one that tells of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt—and when this world is burnt up, the song that will go up to God in Heaven will be the song of Moses—the servant of God and of the Lamb! Still, if we want a figure and a foretaste of the ultimate victories of God over all His people's enemies, we have to go back to the Red Sea and look at Miriam's twinkling feet, and hear her fingers making the timbrel sound as she cries, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." He did it to make Himself an ever-enduring name—and He has succeeded in that objective.

Isaiah adds that the Lord led His people and brought them into their rest to make Himself “a glorious name.” God is glorious in the history of Israel. God is glorious in the history of His Church. God is glorious in the history of every Believer. The life of a true Believer is a glorious life! For himself he claims no honor, but by his holy life he brings great glory to God. There is more glory to God in every poor man and woman saved by Grace and in the one unknown obscure person, washed in the Redeemer’s blood, than in all the songs of cherubim and seraphim who know nothing of Free Grace and dying love! So you see, Beloved, the motive of God in all that He did, and I dwell upon it, though briefly, yet with much emphasis because this is a motive that can never alter! What if the Church of today is reduced to a very low condition and the Truth of God seems to be ebbing out from her shores, while a long stretch of the dreary mud of modern invention lies reeking in the nostrils of God? He that worked such wonders, to make Himself a name, still has the same objective in view! He will be glorious! He will have men know that He is God and beside Him there is none else! Thus says the Lord God, “All flesh shall know that I the Lord am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” “The earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

O Brothers and Sisters, He is still a jealous God, and when the precious blood of Christ is insulted, God hears it and forgets it not! When the Inspiration of the blessed Book is denied, the Holy Spirit hears it and is grieved—and He will yet bestir Himself to defend His Truth. When we hear the Truth of God that we love, the dearest and most sacred Revelations from our God, treated with a triviality that is nothing less than profane, if we are indignant, so is He! And shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily, though He bears long with His adversaries. God’s motive is His own Glory. He will stand to that and He will vindicate it! And we need to have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a fear about the ultimate result of a collision between God and the adversaries of His Truth. Shall not the moth that dashes at the candle, die in that flame? How shall the creatures of a day stand out against our God who is a consuming fire? Here, then, is the hope of the people of God—the constant persistent, invariable motive of God to make Himself glorious in the eyes of men!

III. My third point is AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY which I find twice over in my text. Believing in what God has done, and believing that His motive still remains the same, we begin to cry, “Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him?”

This question suggests that *there is some faith left*. “Where is He?” He is somewhere. Then, He lives! Beloved, the Lord God Omnipotent still lives and reigns. Many usurpers have tried to turn Him from His Throne, but He still sits upon it and reigns gloriously among His ancients. He was, and is, and is to come—the Almighty—“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

He is, but where is He? The question implies that *some were beginning to seek Him*. Where is He? Those were brave days when He was here on the moors, or on the hills of Scotland, or at the stakes of Smithfield, or the prisons of Lambeth Palace! Those were glorious days when Christ was here and His people knew it and rejoiced in Him. Then the virgin daughter of Zion shook her head at the harlot of Rome and laughed her to scorn—for she lay in the bosom of her King, and rejoiced in His love! O Beloved, do we begin to long after Him again? I hope that we do. I trust the cry of many loyal hearts is, “Come back, King Jesus! When You are away, all things languish. Ride again down the streets of Mansoul, O Prince Emmanuel! Then shall the city ring with holy song and every house shall be bedecked with everything that is beautiful and fair. Only come back!” If the King may but have His own again, I shall be content to sing old Simeon’s song, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word!” The Church longs for the King’s coming. Where is He? Where is He?

It shows now, dear Friends, that she has *begun to mourn over His absence*. I like the reduplicated word. “Where is He? Where is He?” Not, “Where is Moses? Where are the leaders? The fathers, where are they?” Let them stay where they are. But where is He that made the fathers? Where is He that sent us Moses and Aaron? Where is He that divided the waters and led His people safely? Where is He? Oh, it is a question that I put to all your hearts! Oh, if only He were here! One hour of His glorious arm; just a day of His almighty working and what should we not see? We will not ask for tongues of fire, or mighty rushing winds. Let Him be here as He may, but if He is only here, the battle is turned at the gate and the day of His redeemed is come! We sigh for His appearing.

Where is He, then? As the text asks. Well, *He is hidden because of our sins*. The Church has been tampering with His Truth. She has given into the hands of critics the Word of God, to cut it with a penknife, to cut away this and tear out

that. She has been dallying with the world! She has tried to gain money for her objectives by the basest of means. She has played the harlot in what she has done, for there are no amusements too vile or too silly for her. Even her pastors have filled a theater of late, to sit there and mark with their applause the labors of the actors! To this pass have we come at last, to which we never came before—no, not in Rome's darkest hour—and if you, who profess to be God's servants, do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you! The time has surely come when there should go up one great cry unto the Lord Jehovah that He would make bare His arm again, for well may we say, "Where is He? Where is He?"

For your comfort, the next verse to my text tells you where He is. *He is in Heaven*. They cannot expel Him from His Throne. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." By every possible contrivance, in these modern days, they have tried to drive Christ out of His own Church! A Christless, bloodless Gospel defiles many a pulpit, and Christ is thus angered—but He is still in Heaven. At the right hand of God He sits! And let this be our continual prayer to Him, "Look down from Heaven, O Lord! Cast an eye upon Your failing, faltering, fickle Church. Look down from Heaven."

"Where is He?" Well, *He is, Himself, making an enquiry*, for, as some read the whole passage, it is God Himself speaking. He remembered the days of old—Moses and his people. And when He hid Himself and would not work in wrath, yet He said to Himself, "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock?" When God Himself, who is always a stranger here—for are we not strangers with Him and sojourners, as all our fathers were?—When God Himself begins to ask where He is and to regret those happier days, something will come of it! "You that make mention of the Lord—you that are the Lord's remembrances—keep not silence and give Him no rest—take no rest, and give Him no rest—till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "That little cloud," said one of old, when Julian the apostate threatened to extirpate Christianity, "That little Church will soon be gone." All that I see today of darkness is but a wave of smoke. Behold, the Lord God Himself shall chase it away with a strong west wind! He does but blow with His wind and the clouds disappear! And what stands before us today shall be as nothing.

I thought, as I came here tonight, that the man who drives the tram car gave me a lesson on how I should look upon all future time. He starts, say at Clapham, with his car. If he could have a view of all that was on the road between Clapham and the Elephant and Castle—the carts, the wagons and other traffic that are exactly where he wants to go—and he were to add all those obstacles together, He might be foolish enough to say, "I shall not complete my course tonight." But, you see, he starts, and if anything is on the rails, it moves off! And if, perhaps, some sluggish, heavily-laden coal wagon is slow to move, he puts his whistle to his mouth and gives a shrill blast or two, and lo, it is gone!

So when the Church, serving her God, begins to look far ahead through prophecy—which she never did understand and never will—she will think she will never reach her journey's end. But she will, for God has laid the line! We are on the rails and the rails do not come to an end till the journey's end is reached! And as we go along, we shall find that everything in our way will move before us—and if it does not, we will pray a bit. We will blow our whistles and the devil himself will have to move, though all his black horses shall be dragging along the brewer's dray, or what else belongs to him! He will have to get off our track, assuredly as God lives, for if Jehovah sends us on His errands, we cannot fail. The old Romans picture Jove as hurling thunderbolts. Sometimes God makes His *servants*, thunderbolts, and when He hurls them, they will go crashing through everything until they reach their mark! Therefore be not, for a moment, discouraged, but trust in God and be glad without a shadow of fear!

If any here have never trusted in God, never made Him their Friend, or been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, I pray them to think of their present condition. Opposed to God? You are standing in the way of an express train! You are urged to get out of the way. You will not? You are going to throw that train off the rails, you say? Poor fool, I could put my arms about your neck and forcibly drag you from the iron way, for assuredly, if you remain there, nothing can come of it but your everlasting destruction! Therefore, flee, flee, I pray you, from the wrath to come! The train of Divine Judgment comes thundering along the iron road even now! It shakes the earth. Awake! Rise! Flee! God help you to do so! Behold, the Savior stands with open arms to be your shelter. Fly to Him and trust in Him, and live forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 63-64

Isaiah 63:1-6. *Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like him that treads in the wine vat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me; for I will tread them in My anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in My anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.* It is a dark and terrible time—no one at God’s side, His people discouraged, Edom triumphant. Then comes the one great Hero of the Gospel, the Christ of God, and by His own unaided strength He wins for His people a glorious victory. He is as terrible to His foes as He is precious to His friends. He stands before us as the one hope of His ancient Church. There is a picture Isaiah was inspired to paint. Now the Prophet goes on to say—

7. *I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.* Are you, dear Friends, mentioning the loving kindnesses of the Lord, or are you silent about them? Learn a lesson from the Prophet Isaiah. Talk about what God has done for you and for His people in all time—“I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord.” Let this be the resolve of everyone of us who has tasted that the Lord is gracious—

*“Awake, my Soul, in joyful lays,
And sing your great Redeemer’s praise!
He justly claims a song from me,
His loving kindness, oh, how free!
He saw me ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate,
His loving kindness, oh, how great!”*

7. *And the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses.* This is a verse full of sweets, but I must not dwell upon it. My objective at this time is to read much and to say little by way of comments, so I cannot stay to pick out the sweetnesses here. There are very many. This passage is a piece of a honeycomb. Read it when you get home. Pray over it, suck the honey out of it, and praise the Lord for it.

8. *For He said.* In the old time, when God called His people out of Egypt, He said this—

8. *Surely they are My people, children that will not lie.* Or, children that will not act deceitfully, or, will not deal falsely.

8. *So He was their Savior.* He thought well of them. He treated them as though they were trustworthy. He took them into His confidence. He said, “Surely they will not deceive Me.” This is speaking after the manner of men, of course, for God knows us and is never deceived by us. We may deceive others—we may even deceive ourselves—but we can never deceive Him.

9. *In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old.* Happy Israel! These were her golden days, when she was faithful to God, and God communed very closely with her. Then God was very near to His people, so near that He is represented as carrying them in His arms. He could be seen in a bush! He could be seen in a cloud! He could be seen working with a rod! He was very familiar with His people.

10. *But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit. Therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.* This was a great change in dispensation, though there was no change in the heart of God. He deals roughly with His people when they rebel against Him. They would not be improved by tenderness, so now they must be scourged by His rod and come under His displeasure. When men turn from God, He is “turned to be their enemy.”

11. *Then He remembered the days of old.* His people were never out of His mind, even when they wandered away from Him. He remembered the love of their espousals, when they went after Him into the wilderness. He remembered the days of old, the happier days, when His people walked closely with Him. They also remembered these days. It is strange that they should ever have forgotten them.

11 – 14. *Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goes down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.* Now comes a prayer suggested by their condition of sorrow and desolation.

15. *Look down from Heaven.* You are still there, though we have wandered. Look down upon us from Heaven, O, Lord!

15 - 16. *And behold from the habitation of Your holiness and of Your glory: where is Your zeal and Your strength, the sounding of Your heart and of Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting.* That last sentence may be read, “Your name is Our Redeemer, from Everlasting.” This is a sweet plea with God—“We have offended You, but we are still Your children. We have wandered from You, but we are still Your own, bought with a price. Your name of ‘Redeemer’ is not a temporary one—it is from everlasting to everlasting—therefore look on Your poor children again. Leave us not to perish.”

17 - 18. *O Lord, why have You made us to err from Your ways, and hardened our heart from Your fear? Return for Your servants’ sake, the tribes of Your inheritance. The people of Your holiness.* Or, “Your holy people.”

18 - 19. *Have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. We are Yours: You never ruled over them; they were not called by Your name.* “You did give us the land by an everlasting Covenant; but we have had it only a little while. Lo, the enemy has come in and driven Your Israel away from her heritage! Can it be so, always, O Lord?” Happy times seem very short when they are over and, when they are succeeded by dark trials, we say, “The people of Your holiness, Your holy people have possessed it but a little while. Our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary. We are now become (for this is the true rendering of the passage) like those over whom You have never ruled, those who were never called by Your name.” That is a sad condition for the Church of God to be in and I am afraid that it is now getting into that condition, sinking to a level with the world, leaving its high calling, quitting the path of the separated people and becoming just like those whom God never knew and who were never called by His name. It is a pitiful case—and here comes a prayer like the bursting out of a volcano, as though the hearts of gracious men could hold in the agonizing cry no longer—

Isaiah 64:1, 2. *Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your Presence, as when the melting fire burns,* Or, much better, “as when the brushwood burns,” for if God does but come to His people, they are ready to catch on fire, like the dry twigs which are soon ablaze. And His enemies also shall be like brushwood before the fire.

3. *The fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountain flowed down at Your Presence.* O Lord, come again! You came in the past; repeat Your former acts and let us see what You can do for the avenging of Your people.

4. *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what You have prepared for him that waits for You.* God is ready to help. He has everything in preparation before our needs begin. He has laid in supplies for all our needs. Before our prayers are presented, He has prepared His answers to them! Blessed be His name! You remember how Paul uses this passage, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” The spiritual man is a privileged man!

5. *You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness, those that remember You in Your ways.* God does not wait for us to return to Him. He meets us. He comes to us the moment that we turn our feet towards His Throne. While we are, like the prodigal, a great way off, He sees us, and has compassion upon us and runs to meet us.

5. *Behold, You are angry, for we have sinned: in these we continue and we shall be saved.* In Your faithfulness, in Your love, in Yourself, in Your ways of mercy there is continuance. This is our safety! What are we? Here is the answer—

6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* It is not a flattering picture that the Prophet draws! Even our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, fit only for the fire—what must our righteousnesses be like? We, ourselves, are like the sere leaves on the trees and just as the wind carries away the faded leaves of autumn, so our sins, like a mighty blast, carry us away.

7. *And there are none that call upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You.* That is a wonderful description of *prayer*. When a man wakens himself from sinful lethargy and stirs himself up to take hold of God in prayer, he will become an Israel, a prince prevailing with God!

7, 8. *For You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, You are our Father.* Adoption does not come to an end because of sin. Regeneration or sonship does not die out—it cannot die out! I am my father’s son, and so I always shall be. And if I am my heavenly Father’s son, I shall never cease to be so. “Now, O Lord, You are our Father!” This Truth of God must not be perverted into an argument for sinning—it ought, rather, to keep us from sinning, lest we should offend such wondrous love.

8 - 12. *We are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hands. Be not furious, O Lord, neither remember iniquity forever: behold, see, we beseech You, we are all Your people. The holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Will you refrain Yourself for these things, O Lord? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?* The Prophet touches the minor key and weeps and wails for the sorrows of his people, but he does not neglect to pray. In the next chapter God breaks out and says, “I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not.” How much more quickly is He found of them who seek Him! Verily, God does hear prayer! And He *will* hear prayer—let us not cease to pray to Him as we look round on the sad state of the professing Church at this time—and with Isaiah let us cry, “Will You refrain Yourself for these things, O Lord? Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?”

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