

THE SAINT'S HERITAGE AND WATCHWORD

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“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord.”
Isaiah 54:17.

This is the fifth of November, a day notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them forever hateful among upright men. The vast Armada of Spain on which they had relied had been, by the breath of God, scattered and given to destruction. And now the cowardly traitors attempted by the foulest means, the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be the deathblow to both houses and so annihilate the power of Protestantism. But God looked from Heaven, confounded their knavish tricks, laid their secrets bare and exposed their treachery! Hallelujah to the King eternal, immortal, invisible who guarded us and guards us still from the devices of Rome and Hell! Praise to His name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

*“Britons never will be slaves.
While for our princes they prepare,
In caverns deep a burning snare,
He shot from Heaven a piercing ray
And the dark treachery brought to day.”*

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for in 1688 we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery—and the hopes of Satan were great. But sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dearly-bought liberties and, therefore, brought about the glorious revolution by which King William III ascended the throne—and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen for whom our earnest prayers shall rise—

*“Such great deliverance God has worked,
And down to us salvation brought,
And still the care of guardian Heaven,
Secures the bliss itself has given.”*

Blessed be God that on this fifth of November we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the festival of striplings, but by the songs of saints! I think I have now in my possession a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country which has so lately revived and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me if I do not, this morning, return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the Gospel of Christ.

I notice, in my text, two things—the first is *the saint's heritage*. The second *the saint's watchword*.

I. First, THE SAINT'S HERITAGE.

Now, do not suppose that this morning I shall have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that—

*“All things are ours—the gift of God,
The purchase of a Savior's blood.”*

Time would fail us to talk of all the possessions of the child of God. This world is his. Earth is his lodge and Heaven is his home. This life is his—with all its sorrows and its joys. Death is his—with all its terrors and solemn realities. And eternity is his—with its immortality and grandeur. God is his, with all His attributes. The saint has a prospective right to everything. God has made him the heir of all things, for we are co-heirs with Christ, joint-heirs with the Son of God! We have not time enough, in a life of 70 years, even to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions! There is in it such an unfathomable depth, such an immeasurable height, such an intensity of value, such a wealth of preciousness that we would need to read it over an eternal number of times before we could ever be able to comprehend to the fullest, the love of God. So, you see, I am not about to describe the heritage of God's people at large. But I *am* going to speak of the one peculiar item of that bright heritage which is mentioned in my text—and that is *preservation*. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the Church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true Believer, every elect child of God!

First, then, there is the promise that *we shall have protection against the hand of men*. “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” Satan has always used the hand of man against the Church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has always been brought to bear against the Church of God. From the day when Cain, with his club, struck his brother Abel and laid him low, down to the time of Zacharias the son of Barachias and from that time until now, this weapon has been constantly used against the Church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the Church of Christ. Yes, even at the present moment, as I stand here and, with the eyes of fancy, survey our world, I see a fire blazing—fierce is the flame and high its pile of fuel! I see a monarch forging a weapon—a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” I see the armies ready against the Lord of Hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God. [Singularly enough, the battle of Inkermann was at this moment raging, November 5, 1854.] Still, here is our sweet comfort—they may forge the weapon, they may fashion the sword, they may shut the prison door, they may confine the prisoners, they may make their instruments of torture—but they cannot prosper, for God has said it. “He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire.” “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” He will not let it do so!

Let us look back through history and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to His Church in past days. He has done it sometimes in this way—He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch His Church. At other times, He has allowed the sword to do its work and yet, out of evil, He has brought forth good. Sometimes, no weapon that has been formed against the Church has prospered because God has not permitted it so much as to touch His Church. Think of the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder! There he is, at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt, pursuing the chosen race! The sea divides to give passage to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the Red Sea while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left! But the impious monarch, all unmoved by this mighty marvel, shouts, “On, on, soldiers of Memphis! Do you fear to tread where slaves are bold?” Look! They boldly dash between the watery heights—chariots and horses are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! Fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot—they are marching to their tombs! Their weapons shall not prosper! Moses lifts up the rod of God—the parted floods embrace with eager joy and grasp the helpless foe within their arms—

*“Over horse and over car,
Over every man of war,
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold
The loud thundering billows rolled!
Mid the water dark and dread,
Down they sank, they sank like lead!”*

Again, my Brothers and Sisters, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai and for his sake the whole race of the Jews must perish. How cunningly he lays his plots, how readily he obtains

the consent of the king, how sure he is of his revenge! Even now, in imagination, he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, you enemy, delight in your imagination, for it shall be disappointed! Rejoice in your design, but it shall be utterly confounded! There is a God in the courts of Heaven and an Esther in the palace of Shushan! You shall be hanged on your own gallows and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite upon, his sons! O Israel, well may you rejoice at the Feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken! Nor here, alone can we see the promise fulfilled, for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarcely can I speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beast of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death! Let the warriors who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows rise from their long sleep and confess the futility of their efforts! Yes, let monarchs now in the chains of Hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for His chosen! March on, despot! Bid your slaves rise against the free! Crush the helpless and usurp the dominions of your neighbor—but know that the Lord is mightier than you are! Your Northern hordes are not invincible! And Britons, with the help of God, shall teach you that in vain you lift the hand of robbery! You contend with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against you—and you shall know that God has said unto her holy seed, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.”

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has allowed the enemy to exult over us and the sword has been used with terrible effect. There have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen Church of Christ when persecution has cried “Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!” When blood has flowed like water over the land our enemies have triumphed. The martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree. The pastor was cut off and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture, awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried and said, “O Lord, how long? Let it repent You concerning Your servants.” The enemy laughed and said, “Ah, ah, so would we have it.” Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter. And her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets.

O my Soul, how was it, in that sad day, when the enemy came upon her like a flood and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when You would not hear the cry of Your elect! It seemed as if Your ear was deaf. The plaint of the widow was unheeded. The groans, the agonies and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed and You did still allow the enemy to vex Your children. Persecution shook the land and set forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the Church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy God's Church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the Church had a wave of persecution pass over her, she rose out of it and lifted her fair countenance, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” She was all the more glorious for it all!

Every time her blood was shed, each drop became a man and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause of God and the Truth of God! Ah, those were times when instead of the Church being diminished and brought low, God did multiply her and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil! The persecutor did not destroy the Church. The ship of Christ's Church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution and when, at every lurch, she is well-near overwhelmed! Nothing has helped God's Church so much as persecution—she has been increased and strengthened by it!

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the Church at large, but also of every individual Believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O Brother, O Sister, there is a word for you this morning! “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” There are some dear Sisters who come into this House of Prayer under fear of brutal husbands. And there are sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the House of God. Little do some of us know, when we meet here, what our neighbor in the same seat has had to suffer through coming to this House of Prayer. I could unfold a tale that would ruffle up your spirits—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you, my Friend—“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you—it may injure your body, but it cannot injure your soul! “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.” Why should you fear men when God is on your side? Remember that Christ has said, “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and per-

secute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.”

Hold on, young man! Hold on, young woman! Still continue in the fear of God and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good! But mark you, persecutor—if you are here this morning—there is a chain in Hell, of hot iron that shall be bound around your waist! There are fiends that have whips of fire and they shall scourge your soul throughout eternity because you dare to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children! Remember what the Lord Jesus said—“Whoever shall offend one of these little ones, who believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

The second portion of the saint's heritage is “every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” *Here is protection from the tongues of men.* Satan leaves no stone unturned against the Church of God. He uses not simply the hands, but what is more often a sharper weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow, sometimes, but we cannot endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which struck us to the ground, but we cannot so easily recover from slander that lays the character low. Yet the promise of the text is, “Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.”

Look at the Church at large and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When she first came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism—but she has condemned it and its doctrines are now decadent. Then up started philosophers and they said that the Gospel was all foolishness because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher? Where is the Stoic who boasted of his wisdom? Where the Epicurean who lectured in the state of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone and their names are only used to describe things that have ceased to be! Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the Truth of God, but the Church of God has condemned that long ago. The Cross has made the crescent to decrease.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen, one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we have felt rather alarmed because we have heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true and that our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man who said to me, “Ah, Sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible!” But, geology, instead of opposing the Gospel, furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of Revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the Truth of God, but, as soon as it has been better understood, it has been made a pillar in Zion's citadel! Fear not, O sons of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause! Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity, abortion of the night, you have been condemned a thousand times! You are a changeable creature, changing your shape as the ages come and go. Once you were a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire—then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine! Then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre, a speculating theorist with Owen and now a worldly, gross secularizing thing for impious lecturers and their profane admirers! I fear you not, Infidelity—you are an asp, biting at iron, depleting your spleen and breaking your fangs!

My Friends, did you ever, in imagination, walk the centuries and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you seemed to be on a battlefield and to see corpses all around you. You ask the name of the dead and someone replies that it is the corpse of such-and-such a system, or the carcass of such-and-such a theory. And, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish and, in 50 years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme and its epitaph will be, “Here lies a fool, called of old, a Secularist.” What shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West? Or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery? Or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each of these errors but that their death-knell shall soon toll and these children of Hell shall sink back to their birthplace in the Pit. Yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints of the Lord—and she does still hold the wine-cup of abomination in her hands. And she is still robed in scarlet and her sway is over many waters—but she shall be condemned in judgment! Lo, the millstone in the hand of the archangel hastens to its fall and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow! Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, “Shout, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Sing, O you inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished and every opposing tongue is condemned!”

This promise is the personal heritage of each child of God—“Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” What a sweet thought that is to me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, “He is a

good man." Others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners and bring more into His Church, men may say what they like about me! I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought Infallibles in this matter. You never hear of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered and vilified! But here is a promise for him—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." Then the more accusers, the more acquittals! The more slander, the more honor! So let the enemy slander us as much as he pleases!

But I know that there are some of my hearers who believe and love the Doctrines of Grace and, sometimes, you are called to dispute and contend them. I trust you are. I hope you love to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you—when you come to talk with an infidel, you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me." Yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." The last time you had that dispute, you thought that your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrongly! He might glory in his intellectual prowess. He might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed—and when darkness is all around him, he will begin to think seriously. He conquered you in appearance, but now you master him! Wait till he is sick and then your words shall ring in his ears—they shall come up again from the grave, if he should survive you—and then you will conquer him. Do not be afraid to argue for the Truth of God. Do not think that infidels are wise men, or that Arminians are so exceedingly learned. Stand up for the Truth—and there is so much solid learning and real Truth to be found in the Doctrines that we uphold [Doctrines of Grace] that none of you need be ashamed of them! They are mighty and must prevail! The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, make them triumphant!

There is one who has risen against me in judgment many a time and I daresay he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here—that is, Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin, he says, "You would not sin like that if you had been a child of God. You have no interest in the Covenant—you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment and so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said! I have told him, sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies," but, at other times, I have believed his malicious accusations. It is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the Evil One. You, my Brothers and Sisters, are not ignorant of his devices. He has set conscience at you, the Hell-hounds of legal convictions have howled upon you and the drum of terrible doom has thundered in your ears! Then up has stood the fiend, himself, and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion! Ah, but how glorious was the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience and assured us that He had pleaded our cause in the Court of King's Bench above! And, oh, when He showed us the adversary's brief spoiled by the nails of the Cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned and his calumnies hushed! Glorious Counselor, all praise be to Your adorable name!

Let the saints also know that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the Day of Judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his bronze front scarred with thunder, receive his sentence and begin a Hell more terrible than all he has endured before. O saint, do you not know that you shall judge him? Know you not that you shall judge angels? You sons of God shall sit as co-assessors with His first-born Son and when He shall pronounce the doom of the old dragon, you shall solemnly say, "Amen," to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one—you shall tread upon the lion and the dragon! Your foot shall be upon the head of your enemy and you shall know that the promise of this text is fulfilled in your own experience—"Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Now, Beloved, I think I have spoken sufficiently, for the present, on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons forged against us are not to prosper and the tongues raised against us are to be condemned.

II. Now I am to speak upon THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord."

In ancient times, as well as at the present time, armies used to have their watchwords by which they might recognize one another in the dark. We need a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God Himself gives us the watchword—"Their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus

Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of the Truth. I mean "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that *Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God* and also that *their righteousness, their salvation, is of God*. There is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be swept away and they shall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them then. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be compelled to give to Him who does all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No, their righteousness—their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice and the calumnies of envy will come from Jehovah! The coat of arms of the Church is in the Lord's hands and He will wipe away every blot from it. The character of the saints, God, Himself, shall vindicate—and all liars shall have their portion in the Lake of Fire and brimstone. Let this be the motto on the flag on our lance! Let this be our cheering watchword—"Our righteousness is of the Lord."

Now for the second meaning. "Their justifying righteousness is of Me," says the Lord. If I wished to best you all—and might ask you only one question, I would ask this—"What is *your* righteousness?" Come along in single file. What is *your* righteousness "Oh, I am as good as my neighbors!" Go along with you, you are not my comrade. What is your righteousness? "Well, I am rather *better* than my neighbors, for I go to chapel regularly." Off with you, Sir! You do not know the watchword. And you next—what is *your* righteousness? "I have been baptized and am a member of the church." Yes, and so you may be, but if that is your only hope, you are still in the gall of bitterness! Now, you next. What is *your* hope? "Oh, I do all I can and Christ makes up the rest." Rubbish! You are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite! Christ is no make weight—away with you! Here comes the last. What is *your* righteousness? "My righteousness is filthy rags, except the righteousness which I have, which Christ worked out for me on Calvary, which is imputed to me by God, Himself, and which makes me pure and spotless as an angel." Ah, Brother, you and I are fellow soldiers! I have found you—that is the watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists! If you do but know this watchword—"Your righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." I can leave all those minor things if you can sing—

*"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."*

Tell me that you have any other trust and I will have nothing to do with you! Tell me that you can work out your own salvation without God's help and I will not acknowledge you as my Brother. But if you tell me that, from first to last, you rely only on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as my fellow soldier and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you!

But, to wind up, we have had the heritage of the saints and we have had the watchword of the saints, what more shall I say? I will say—How well God has kept His promise! Has He not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year—the fifth Jubilee—since under the Parliament House the train was laid and the gunpowder ready to blow up the Houses of Lords and Commons and utterly to destroy the nation! Ah, how Satan gloated over the thought that he would destroy the Church of God and exalt his darlings to honor in the places of those who loved the Lord! The plotters said, "The foundations will be destroyed and then what will the righteous do?" They thought that surely their end would be accomplished, but how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers and found out the plot and Popery has been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain! Blessed be the name of the Lord, "No weapon that is formed against His Church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon the page of history and exclaim, "God is true, and past events are witnesses of His faithfulness!"

O Beloved, has the Holy Spirit given you an inwrought knowledge of the Truth of this promise of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter—and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these Covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family and then, ah, then how shall we with rapture review delivering Grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! Hark! I thought I

heard sweet music! I thought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spice groves of Araby! I hear a sound, not earthly—it is—it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can compare with these! O river of harmony, where are the lips from which you flow? The heavens are opened! I see a host in white robes, with crowns on their heads and palm branches in their hands! Who are these? And where did they come from? These are they who have passed through great tribulation and who tell us, “We have whited our robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are we without fault before the Throne of God, and we serve Him day and night in His temple.” Holy ones, repeat your song! Saints of God, re-echo the chorus! Repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it! What do you sing? “No weapon that is formed against us has prospered; every tongue that has risen against us in judgment we have condemned. This is our heritage, our righteousness is of the Lord.” Now, saints below, take up the strain and sing it by holy, joyous, confident anticipation—

*“No weapon has prospered, the foe is overcome!
No tongue has succeeded, the wise ones are dumb!
The Lord is our glory and each of the host
Shall yet shout ‘Hosanna,’ on Canaan’s fair coast!”*

Glory be to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ISAIAH 43:14-28; 44:1-8.

Isaiah 43:14-16. *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, which makes a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty water.* Great events in history all have some connection with the Church of Christ. We may not always be able to see it, but we may rest assured that it is so. The rise and fall of empires have a great deal to do with the chosen people of God. So here He reminds them of what He did in the ancient days when He smote Egypt at the Red Sea and made a path for His people through the mighty waters.

17. *Which brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as flax.* There is a little blaze and a little smoke and then all is over with the flax. So shall it be with those who set themselves up against the Lord—He shall confound their wisdom and humble their pride.

18, 19. *Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing.* What God has done once, He can do again; but He can also make yet grander and more marvelous displays of His power and Grace than He has ever yet given!

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give water in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.* If then, O child of God, you are in sore distress—if all around you is comfortless as a howling wilderness, yet do not despair! God can make a way for you even there, and can supply your needs. He can open up a way in the wilderness and rivers in the midst of the desert! Joy and rejoicing may come to you even in the depths of your distress.

21. *This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.* He will not be disappointed in His people. He made them that He might get glory out of them and He will surely have it—none shall be able to prevent it.

22-24. *But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have You honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have brought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.* Remember that this is the wearied Lord who is speaking, the Lord whose patience seems to be well-near exhausted by the provocations of His people—yet how wonderful is His message to them!

25, 26. *I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My sake, and will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance. Let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified.* “If you have anything to say in your

own defense, out with it! Come to Me and let the cause of this quarrel be removed. Let Me hear your plea if you have one.”

27, 28. *Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have transgressed against Me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.* God justifies himself for His heavy strokes upon Israel—He tells them that the reason lay in their own sin.

Isaiah 44:1-3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD, that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you. Fear not O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* “Think not that I am anxious to punish you for your sin. Only return to Me, and I will be delighted to bless you. I will help you out of your troubles. I will supply your needs and not only so, but I will bless your children, generation after generation.”

4, 5. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with His hand unto the LORD, and, surname himself by the name of Israel.* God still has power over human hearts—He can bring back to himself His wandering children.

6. *Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of Hosts; I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God.* He gathered up all into Himself as He is the First and the Last, where is there space for any other god? He, therefore, would have all our hearts. He would have us love, adore and serve Him and Him alone.

7. *And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me. Since I appointed the ancient people and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show these to them.* If these idols are gods, let them prophesy and tell what is to happen in the future! But they cannot even speak to one another.

8. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses, is there a God beside Me? Indeed, there is no other God; I know not any.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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