

THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN

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A SERMON
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“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”
John 6:37.

A COUNTRY gentleman is expecting a number of persons to come and dine with him. He has a little side swing-gate at the entrance to the park through which people generally come, but, on the day when he expects company, he says to one of his men, “John, be sure that you set the big gates wide open, for we are expecting several people to come in.” And that is the order which I have received from my Master—He is expecting company! The evangelistic services in the South of London will, I trust, bring large numbers of people to feast with my Lord at His banqueting table and I believe it is His will that I should set the big gates wide open so that some sinners who might be passing by, would take that act as an invitation to them to come in! I feel sure that they will come in, for God is going to bring them in! He is about to stretch forth His almighty arm and to compel them to come in, that His House may be filled! So my objective in this discourse is to proclaim the fullness and freeness of the Grace of God—in the hope that some may be led to come to Christ and so to obtain eternal life!

But, first, our text sets before us a rather knotty point, yet it reveals to us an excellent way of untying the knot. This is the knotty point. It would seem from the text that the Father has given some souls to Christ and not only from this text, but also from a great many other passages of Scripture it is clear that God has a people whom He has chosen unto eternal life—and that Christ has redeemed a people from among men. It is no use trying to shut your eyes to this Truth of God, as some do, for it is there. And unless we really wish to twist the plain meaning of words and to make something out of Scripture which Scripture does not naturally teach, we shall never be able to escape from the Doctrine of Divine Predestination—the Doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life!

Now, if you like you can make any number of difficulties out of that Truth of God. If you wish to do so, here is a whole forest before you and you can easily find wood enough to make a gallows to hang yourself! It is true that if you wish to wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction, you will have to use very bad reasoning in order to do it—but it will be no worse reasoning than many other people have used before you. It is true that *everything* is predestinated and that *everything* that happens is ordered according to the unfailing purpose and will of God—yet you will go to bed tonight and get up tomorrow morning and go about your business, never thinking of that predestination, but, acting like people of common sense, guided by the ordinary rules of sound judgment. That is to say, you will do that in ordinary matters, but there are some of you who will not act in the same sensible way in *spiritual* things—you will twist this Doctrine around and look at it in all manner of strange ways till you are dizzy with gazing at it and trying to make some excuse out of it for not coming to Jesus Christ!

My text, however, cuts the ground from under your feet, if you seek to act thus, for it tells you this, which is all you need to know, that all who are God's chosen ones may be known by this mark—that *they come to Christ*. Just as He said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” So that those who come to Christ are *God's chosen people* and those who live and die without coming to Christ are not God's people. If you come to Christ and trust in Him, you are one of those whom the Father gave to His Son. If you refuse to come to Christ—it matters not what excuse you may make—your blood will be upon your own head. You will perish if you do not come to Christ! And if you do not come to Him, it will be because you were not one of His sheep and neither did the Father give you to Christ. Rowland Hill, when he was asked to preach only to the elect, said that he would do so if somebody would chalk them on the back. That cannot be

done. But God does, in process of time, mark them all—not on the back, but on the heart! He that believes on the Son has everlasting life and his faith proves that he was chosen of God to that life! But he that believes not on the Son, if he persists in that unbelief, will assuredly perish, for there shall be no deviation from this Divine declaration, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” That is the matter with which we have to deal. May God help us, like prudent men, to deal with it earnestly!

I. Leaving that knotty point altogether, I notice in our gloriously free and open text, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” that there is A NECESSARY ACT and that is, that we come to Christ.

Before we go any further, let me ask, “How many of us have come to Christ?” I believe that by far the larger proportion of those now present have done so and I am grateful that I am able to believe that. If any of you who have thought of coming to the Lord’s Table have never come to Christ, I implore you not to come to the Communion until you are truly converted. None have any right to the sacred emblems but those who have already enjoyed true communion with Christ by believing in Him! If you have not come to Christ, you must not act as if you had done so, for that would not benefit you and it would insult the Lord and bring great guilt upon your own conscience. No, Brothers and Sisters, we must come to Jesus Christ—that is our one business if we would be saved—to come to Christ is not only the main point in it, but it is the top, bottom, middle and whole of it!

“What is it to come to Christ?” asks someone. Here I feel a solemn trembling come over me, for too often in trying to explain what faith is, and what coming to Christ is, we darken counsel “by words without knowledge” and God forbid that I should do that! Look at the words which Christ used, “Him, that comes to Me.” He speaks of an action, a movement, but not of an action or movement of the body, for there were many who came to Christ in a physical sense, but they were not saved by such a coming as that. *This coming is an action, or movement, or turning of the mind.* You know readily enough what it is for the mind to come to such-and-such a point. But observe that the pith of the matter lies here, “Him that comes to *Me*.” Saving faith is a coming to Christ—to the Person of Christ—it is not merely to believe that Christ is God, though you must believe that if you would be saved. It is not merely to believe that Christ is a Sacrifice for sin, though you must believe that, too. It is not merely to believe that Christ lived, and died, and rose again for our salvation, though those three blessed facts must be believed. But it is to COME TO HIM. If you had seen Him when He uttered these words, perhaps you would have understood them better, for there He stood, the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief”—the very Person of whom John the Baptist had said, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.”

Jesus Christ says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Everybody knows what it is for the mind to trust in a Doctrine, but you will perish if you trust only to Doctrine! The true way of salvation is trusting to the living Person of Jesus Christ who is the God-appointed Savior. Perhaps some of you know what it is to trust to Baptism, Confirmation, “sacrament”—but you will perish if you trust only to them. You must come, not to them, to sprinkling or immersion, or the “mass” or to the Communion—but to HIM, to the Christ who, upon the accursed Cross, has made expiation for all who trust in Him! You must come, by faith, to that Cross and accept Him as your Substitute. He has gone up into Heaven, but He is pleading there for sinners—and you must dart the eyes of your mind upwards to Him in such a way that you will trust in Him who has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory. That is coming to Christ—the mind resting in His Person and in His atoning Sacrifice.

It is clear, too, that when we come to a certain thing, we come from something else, so that coming to Christ implies that you leave something behind. And he who would be saved must leave behind the sins he formerly loved. He must come to the Holy Savior to be made holy. He must come to sit at Jesus’ feet to learn His commands and to be willing to obey them. Jesus Christ will not save any man who abides *in his sins*—He came to save His people *from their sins*. The salvation of Jesus Christ is a salvation not merely from the guilt and the penalty of sin, but from the sin, itself—from the foulness and degradation of it. If we would come to Christ, we must come away from sin. Repentance must make us turn from sin, and faith must make us turn to Christ—and we must also come away from self-righteousness if we are to come to Christ. It is very difficult for some people to part with their self-righteousness. They have looked in the mirror till they are in love with themselves and they cannot bear to be separated from their beloved self. They feel so good, so proper, so respectable, so excellent, so amiable, so lovely and so dear to themselves that they would gladly hang their self-righteousness about their neck and embrace it as long as they can! But, Sirs, you must come away from it! You must learn

to look at it as a loathsome thing—and such it would appear to you if you could see it in the light in which God sees it! And you must give up every trust except trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, is coming to Him—coming away from your sinful self and your righteous self—and putting your trust alone in the one great Surety and Substitute for sinners!

When we come to a person in the full sense of the word, come, we also stay with that person. If I walk past a man in the street, I have certainly come to him in a sense. But I have also gone beyond him and so I have also gone from him. But *when a soul really comes to Christ, that soul stays with Christ and rests in Him*. Does it not need anything else? No. Surely it needs some more holiness? No. Does it not need a fuller pardon? No. Does it not need additional support? No. Does it not need some addition to its robe of righteousness? No. Does it not need another washing? No, for the Apostle says to those who have come to Christ, “You are complete in Him.” Having come to Him, you stay with Him and rest in Him. The saved soul does not take temporary lodgings with Christ, but abides in Him!

Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this question personally to everyone of you, but you can, each one, put it to yourselves, “Have *you* come to Jesus Christ?” That is to say, is He your only confidence, or have you any other hope? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ alone? If so, you have come to Him and the promise in the text is yours—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

II. This brings us to the next point which is A NEEDLESS FEAR BANISHED.

There are some persons who say that they would gladly come to Christ but they fear that if they did come to Him, He would reject them. Ask them why and one of them says, “*I am too old to come to Christ.*” Will you kindly read the text, my venerable Friend? “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Now, if Christ cast out anyone who came to Him because he was too old, the text would not be true! There is nothing written between the lines—you may look as long as you like, but you will not find there anything like this, “Him that comes to Me up to 75 years of age, I will in no wise cast out.” Christ says nothing of the kind! If you were a 100 years old—if you were two hundred—it would make no difference to Him! He would still say, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Perhaps another says, “*I am too young to come to Christ.*” Possibly there are some children here who have had the thought in their minds, “We are too young to come to Christ.” But that cannot be, for He said, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.” And He also said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.” You cannot possibly be too young to come to Christ, for He says, “Him that comes to Me”—and He intends that the youngest one who comes should be included—“I will in no wise cast out.”

Many persons, however, see no difficulty as far as they are concerned, but they suppose that there is some difficulty because of their position. “May I come?” one asks, “*I am so very poor.*” The poorer you are, the more welcome you are to come! There is not a syllable here about property. Christ simply says, “Him that comes to Me.” It does not matter though you come in rags, or though you come in the workhouse suit—whatever your outward appearance may be is of no consequence to our blessed Lord! Though you are as poor as poverty, itself, if anybody has any preference, I think that you will be all the more welcome to Jesus Christ because of that very poverty, for of old it was especially mentioned that the poor had the Gospel preached to them! And God has often chosen the poor of this world and made them, by His Grace, rich in faith. Come along with you, my poor Brothers and Sisters!

“Oh!” says another, “but it is not poverty that is the difficulty with me, it is *my lack of education.*” Well, my Friend, I am very sorry for you if you cannot read or write. That is a misfortune for you in many ways, but it has nothing to do with your salvation! I should think that there were very few of the early Christians who could read or write. Certainly, those who put up the inscriptions over the tombs in the Catacombs made all sorts of mistakes in spelling and grammar—and I suppose that they were as well educated as the most of the Christians who were buried there. What has the Gospel of Christ to do with education? You do not need a degree from a university—you do not need to be a master of arts, or bachelor of arts, in order to find Christ! Knowledge sometimes misleads in spiritual things. I would not commend ignorance, but certainly it is a fact that the shepherds of Bethlehem, when they wanted to see the newborn King, went straight to Him, but the wise men from the East went a long way round before they came to Him. Augustine used to say, “While Pharisees and philosophers are fumbling to find the latch of God’s door, the poor and illiterate have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven.” If you did but believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and did but rest yourself wholly upon Him, even if you were half an idiot, Christ would not cast you out! Yes, if there were only a faint glimmer of

intelligence within your soul, yet if there were enough to catch the flame of faith, you would be saved—so let not that matter keep any of you back!

“Ah,” says another, “I should not be kept back by such a thing as *that*, but *it is my past character that is my hindrance*.” Well, dear Friend, I will not enquire into your past character, but will take it for granted that it has been as bad as it could be. Yet, even then, what does Christ say in our text? Does He say anything about character? No, He simply says, “Him that comes to Me.” And if the person who comes to Him should have committed every crime of which it is possible for humanity to be guilty, my text would not allow even *him* to be excluded! I do bless my Lord and Master that He did not put any exclusions or exceptions here. Neither thief, nor drunk, nor harlot, nor adulterer, nor even murderer is shut out here! “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” So it stands and so it shall remain. If he will but come to Christ, he cannot be cast out on account of his sins! But his sins, which are many, shall all be forgiven him—he shall be pressed to the heart of everlasting Love and the kiss of pardon shall be imprinted upon his cheek!

I fancy that I hear someone else say, “I have not been guilty of any of those gross sins. I have almost wished—though perhaps it is a wicked wish—that I had been, for then I think I could feel more than I do now. Through the gracious arrangements of Providence I have been kept from gross outward sin and *I cannot feel what I want to feel of repentance*.” No, dear Friend, but the Lord does not ask you to repent of sins that you have not committed. Just look at what you have done and do not wish that your sin was any greater than it is, for that would, indeed, be a wrong thing. “I do look at what I have done,” says one, “yet I cannot repent.” And do you expect to repent before you come to Christ? Is that your idea of the Gospel plan? The Gospel, as I understand it, is—to quote Joseph Hart’s well known lines—

*“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

I also remember that Peter said to the high priest concerning Christ, “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give (mark that term, *to give*) repentance.” It is not for you to bring repentance to Him, but to come to Him for it! Some of you have been looking to the Law to make you conscious of your sin. Do you not know that—

*“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone”?*

But if you will come to Jesus and trust in Him, then—

*“A sense of blood-bought pardon
Will dissolve the heart of stone.”*

You are to trust Jesus for a new heart, for repentance, for a tender conscience—if you cannot come to Him *with* them, come to Him *for* them. O you broken-hearted, come to Christ but do not plead your broken hearts! And you who want to have your hearts broken, come to Christ to break them! He is able, with the mighty hammer of His Gospel Grace, to break the heart of stone!

“Ah,” says another, “I believe I *have* come to Christ. I know that I do wish to have Him as my only trust, but *I have not the experience that I have read about in others*. I have read of some people being dreadfully cut up, distressed and alarmed under a sessions of sin, but I have not been like that.” Whoever said that you should be? Listen again to the text, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Does Christ say anything about experience, law-work and all that sort of thing? Blessed be God, though men may set up those barriers around the Cross of Christ, the Lord has not set them up! If you come to Him, if you are trusting in Him, *whatever* your experience may be or *may not be*, He will not—He *cannot* cast you out! There are certain preachers whom I have heard who seem to me to be wonderfully busy trying to shut sinners out of the Kingdom of God! They are terribly afraid that more people should get saved than ought to be. They look upon Heaven as a sort of close borough into which a certain number of £10 householders may be admitted, but nobody else! They are dreadfully afraid lest there should be found in the Heavenly fold one that is not the Lord Jesus Christ’s sheep. Such a fear as that never yet penetrated my heart—I bless His name that I have an ardent longing that many may come to Jesus—and I think that kind of spirit ought to be in all Christians, for Christ’s words suggest it, “Him that comes to me”—not one special sort of “him” or any other sort, but any “him” who comes, whoever he may be—“I will in no wise cast out.”

“Ah,” says another, “but *I have such a little faith.*” Bless God that you have even a little! Have I not often told you that if you have only starlight, you should bless God for it and He will give you moonlight? And if you have moonlight and bless God for it, He will give you daylight? Be thankful for any genuine faith that you possess! Does Christ say, “Him that comes to Me with a great faith”? No, Brothers and Sisters, if you come to Christ with only a grain of faith in your heart, the text must shut you in—it cannot shut you out! Do but come to Christ. Do but trust in Him and, however feeble your faith, if it is but sincere faith in Jesus, you are saved by Him, for He is all your salvation and all your desire! It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon whom you rely! Christ is able to save you if you come to Him—be your faith weak or be it strong.

“But,” I think I hear another say, “*I am afraid I am not one of the elect.*” I have already answered that objection. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you *are* one of the elect! Beyond all doubt, if you come to Him, He cannot shut you out because of some secret reason, for He has said, “I will in no wise” that is, for no reason and in no way, and never—“cast you out.” Therefore, there cannot be any secret reason in that unopened book of destiny for your being shut out. If you do but come to Christ, He must receive you, or He will have broken His Word—and that He can never do!

“But,” says another, “*if I come to Christ, I should never hold on to Him.*” That is very likely, but suppose He held you on, what then? “Ah, but I should not have the strength to persevere.” But suppose that nobody on earth or in Hell can separate you from Him, for, “He keeps the feet of His saints,” what then? Suppose when you come to Him, He says to you, “I give unto you eternal life and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of My hands”? Why, Soul, as you have not to take the first step in salvation of yourself without Christ, so you have not to take the second, or the third, or the fourth, or any other step! You must rest only in Him for the whole of the way between here and Heaven! I believe that if you and I were to get as far as the very doorstep of Heaven—if we were to get our fingers on the latch of the gate—we would never get in if the Grace of God did not take us the last inch of the way! But then, the Grace of God *will* do this. Trust in Jesus, for—

*“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep—
All that His Heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Not death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast—
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest.”*

So, any “him” in all the world and any “her,” also, if they do but come to Christ shall not be cast out!

III. We have seen, in the text, first, a necessary act. And next, a needless fear banished. Now we are to see A MOST REASONABLE CONFIDENCE SUGGESTED.

I hope that there are many here who desire to be saved. If so, let them remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” I trust that you all understand that the whole process of salvation, so far as *you* are concerned, is for you to give up every reliance except reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. It has often been said that there are but two steps to Heaven—and that those two are but one—*out of self and into Christ.* If you are, at this moment, holding on to any other confidence, I pray you to let go of it and drop into the arms of Jesus! And know—for God has said it—that the instant you believe in Jesus, you are saved! At that instant there is conferred upon you a share in the Divine Life which will never die out. At the same moment there is taken from you the whole mass of your sin so that it cannot condemn you and will never return upon you. There is also imputed to you a perfect righteousness which shall never be taken from you—and in this spotless robe you may boldly stand even at the last Great Judgment Day!

Can we not all come, just now, and trust Jesus Christ? I mean not only you who have never trusted Christ before, but I would gladly hope that all of us who have believed in Jesus Christ would begin trusting in Him again. I wonder how many times I have had to begin my spiritual life over again at the foot of the Cross? I am always doing it and I am never so happy, so safe, or, I believe, so holy, as when I stand just as I did at first—at the foot of the Cross and look up, and say to my dear Lord and Savior—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*

If any Brother or Sister thinks that he has become perfect, he can appear in that character better than I can, for I cannot go to God in that fashion. The moment I think I am getting on in “the higher life,” if I go back to the Cross, my “higher life” all vanishes! In fact I have no “higher life.” I have nothing but what Christ gives me—I am a wretched, miserable beggar dependent upon Him for everything! And I am never so right before Him as when I feel that it is so and just look to Him as I did when I first came to Him and put my trust in Him. Some brethren have a dreadful tumble because they have been building up their pretty little fancied experiences something like what I have seen on the top of a mountain. Certain people always want to see a little further than anyone else can, so they build a little wooden platform and stand on that. It is, no doubt, very delightful to stand up there and feel that you are so many feet higher than anybody else. But that platform gets rotten, in time, and all of a sudden it breaks—and all on it come down with it and they are very apt to say that the mountain itself is crumbling! Nonsense, the mountain is all right, but you tried to get above the mountain! If you had kept down where you ought to have been—on the granite rock—you would not have tumbled. I charge every child of God to strive after perfect holiness with all his might, but never to think that he has gotten any further than this—“Jesus Christ is All-in-All to me and I am nothing at all apart from Him. On Him do I hang and in Him alone do I trust.”

The comfortable assurance of the text is this, *“If Jesus Christ will not cast me out, He will take me in.”* He must do either the one or the other, there is no middle course. I never read of anybody but those He blesses and those He curses—those to whom He is a savor of life and those to whom He is a savor of death. Then, as I just said, if He will not cast me out, I know what He will do—He will take me in, He will wash me, He will cleanse me, He will clothe me, He will feed me, He will reveal Himself to me, He will make me His brother and His friend, He will keep me in life, keep me in death and bring me to be with Him where He is, that I may behold His Glory!

Now, who will begin with Jesus, or begin again with Jesus? By His Grace, I will! Savior, I have no confidence but in Your precious blood. I have preached Your Gospel for many a year and, by so doing, have been the means of bringing many sinners to You—but this I count less than nothing as the groundwork of my hope of eternal life—for that I rest on You, and on You alone!

Now, Sinners, come along, and may the Holy Spirit graciously lead you to do as we are now doing. And then, as you go your way, each one of you can say, “He will never cast me out, for I have come to Him.” Trust Jesus, I implore you. He is worthy of your trust, for He is the Son of God and He has died to put away the guilt of all who trust Him! I wish someone would say, “I have tried to save myself, but I cannot do it. I will trust Him to do it and I believe that He can, and that He will.” Ah, my Friend, you will never be disappointed if you make such a blessed resolve as that! May God, by His Grace, enable you to do it—and to Him shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*ISAIAH 55.***

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* The description of Gospel blessings grows sweeter as it advances. “Waters” first. “Wine and milk” next—and still all “without money and without price.”

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* All your largest desires you long for, you will find in Christ! You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the Grace of God.

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me.* This is the gate by which salvation enters into man—Ear Gate, by hearing and believing—“Incline your ear,” bend it forward as if you would catch every word “and come unto Me.”

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Only think of a Covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners. God shaking hands with guilty men in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is a sure Covenant, too. Not made up of “ifs” and, “buts” and, “perhapses”—but a Covenant sealed with

blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have “strong consolation.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness of the Immutable Love of God and to be to us our Captain and our King. Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the cave Adullam, gathered to himself “everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them.” Even so, the great Antitype, David’s Son and David’s Lord is now willing to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world! And God says, “I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

5. *Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.* What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run to Him. We do not preach the Gospel, dear Brothers, at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ men must be saved! They must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a Divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified!

6. *Seek you the LORD while He may be found.* In these happy Gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that “He may be found.”

6. *Call you upon Him while He is near.* And He is very near when the Gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin!

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way.* It is a bad way. It is a downward way. It is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer—“Let the wicked forsake his way.”

7. *And the unrighteous man his thoughts.* “Thoughts!” says one, “we shall not be hanged for our thoughts.” Oh, but you may be *damned* for your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness! If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. *And let him return.* He is like one who has wandered from his father’s house—“let him return.” He is like the dove that flew away from Noah’s ark and was ready to faint—“let him return.”

7. *Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* What a blessed word, “abundantly,” is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin! Abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His Word!

8. *For*—Says God, as if He would not leave the Prophet to speak any longer on His behalf, He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks! “For”—

8. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD.* No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow. We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive—all this is very difficult to men.

9. *For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God’s forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height, “for as the Heavens are higher than the earth,” so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10, 11. *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from Heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, and gives seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you and it must refresh you! Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom and remain there to bless you forever! They shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled. As for us who preach that Word, or teach it in the Sunday school, we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain nor spend our

strength for nothing. No, no, the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God's Word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain! The messages of mercy fly like snowflakes from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. *For you shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything around you into its true position. The whole Creation is a vast organ and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. *Instead of the thorn.* Which is everywhere today, pricking our feet and maiming our hand—"Instead of the thorn"—

13. *Shall come up the fir tree.* There is the thorn? I see it upon the bleeding brows of Christ! He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. *And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name.* It shall make men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! "It shall be to Jehovah for a name."

13. *For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign and this is the sign that God has given—His converting Grace in His Church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

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