

A Little Sanctuary

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that even when God's people are scattered, chastened, and oppressed, God Himself becomes their little sanctuary, offering comfort and divine presence amid trials.

Scripture: Ezekiel 11:16, Deuteronomy 28, Job 1:21, Psalm 30:5, Psalm 137, Genesis 4:8, Genesis 16:12, Daniel 6

Topics: "Divine Comfort", "God's Presence"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound truth that God remains a sanctuary for His people even when they are scattered, oppressed, and under chastisement. Drawing from Ezekiel 11:16, Spurgeon encourages believers to recognize God's sovereign hand in their trials and to find comfort in His loving presence. Through vivid biblical illustrations and pastoral insight, he offers hope and strength to those enduring spiritual barrenness and opposition. This sermon reminds Christians that their ultimate rest and peace lie in God's faithful care amid life's hardships.

Transcript

"Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them, as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."Ezekiel 11:16.

THE TEXT BEGINS WITH "therefore." There was a reason for God's speaking in this way. It is profitable to trace the why and the wherefore of the gracious words of the Lord. The way by which a promise comes usually shines with a trail of light. Upon reading the connection we observe that those who had been carried captive were insulted by those who tarried at Jerusalem. They spoke in a very cruel manner to those with whom they should have sympathized. How often do prosperous brothers look with scorn on the unfortunate! Did not Job of old complain, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease"?

The Lord hears the unkind speeches of the prosperous when they speak bitterly of those who are plunged in adversity. Read the context""Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession." This unbrotherly language moved the Lord to send the prophet Ezekiel with good and profitable words to the children of the captivity. Many a time the cruel word of man has been the cause of a tender word from God. Because of the unkindness of these people, therefore God, in lovingkindness, addressed in words of tender grace those whom they despised. As, in

our Saviour's days, the opposition of the Pharisees acted upon the Saviour like a steel to the flint, and fetched bright sparks of truth out of him, so the wickedness of man has often been the cause why the grace of God has been more fully revealed. This is some solace when under the severe chastisement of human tongues.

Personally, I am glad of this comfort. I would gladly be at peace with all men: I would not unnecessarily utter a word of provocation; but it is a world in which you cannot live at peace unless you are willing to be unfaithful to your conscience. Offences, therefore, will come. But why should we fret unduly under this trial when we perceive that out of opposition to the cause of God occasions arise for the grandest displays of God's love and power? If from the showers we gain our harvests, we will not mourn when the heavens gather blackness, and the rain pours down. If the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, then let man be wrathful if he wills. Brethren, let us brace ourselves to bear the bruises of slanderous tongues! Let us take all sharp speeches and cutting criticisms to God. It may be that he will hear what the enemy has said, and that he will be very pitiful to us. Because of the bitterness of the oppressor he will bring home to our heart by the Spirit, with greater tenderness and power, some sweet word of his which has lain hidden from us in his Book. Be not dismayed, but go to him who is the God of all comfort, who comforteth all those that are bowed down, and he will give you a word which shall heal your wounds, and breathe peace into your spirit.

Now to proceed at once to our text, seeing that the occasion of it is a sufficient preface. Let us notice, first, where God's people may be, and yet be God's people. They may be by God's own hand "scattered among the countries, and cast far off among the heathen." And, secondly, what God will be to them when they are in such circumstances. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." May the Holy Spirit, who spake by Ezekiel, speak through these words to our hearts!

I. First, then, WHERE GOD'S PEOPLE MAY BE.

If you ask where they may be, the answer to the question is, first, they may be under chastisement.

If you will remember, in the Book of Deuteronomy, God threatened Israel that if they, as a nation, sinned against him, they should be scattered among the nations, and cast far off among the heathen. Many a time they so sinned. I need not recapitulate the story of their continued transgressions and multiplied backslidings. The Lord was slow to fulfil his utmost threatenings, but put forth his utmost patience, till there was no more room for long-suffering. At last the threatened chastisement fell upon them, and fierce nations carried them away in bonds to the far-off lands of their dread. They were not utterly destroyed: their being scattered among the people showed that they still existed. Though they were a people scattered and peeled, yet they were a people, even as Israel is to this day. For all that tyrants and persecutors have ever done, yet the Jew is still extant among us, even as the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. Israel is still to the front, and will be to the world's end. The Lord hath not cast away his people, even though he has cast them far off among the heathen. He has scattered them among the countries, but they are not absorbed into those countries; they still remain a people separated unto the living God, in whom he will yet be glorified.

But, assuredly, the chosen seed came under chastisement. When, by the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept, yea, they wept when they remembered Zion, then were they under the Lord's heavy hand. The instructed among them knew that their being in exile was the fruit of the transgressions of their fathers, and the result of their own offences against God. And yet, though they were under chastisement, God

loved them, and had a choice word for them, which I will by-and-by endeavour to explain to you; for the Lord said, "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary." Beloved, you and I may lie under the rod of God, and we may smart sorely because of our iniquities, even as David did; and yet we may be the children of God towards whom he has thoughts of grace. Our moisture may be turned into the drought of summer, while day and night the Lord's hand is heavy upon us; we may be in sore temporal trouble, and may be compelled by an enlightened conscience to trace our sorrow to our own folly. We may be in great spiritual darkness, and may be compelled to confess that our own sins have procured this unto ourselves. And yet, for all that, the Lord may have sent the chastisement in love, and in nothing else but love; and he may intend by it, not our destruction, but the destruction of the flesh; not our rejection, but our refining, not our curse, but our cleansing. Let us take comfort, seeing that God has a word to say to his mourners and to his afflicted, and that word in the text is a "yet" which serves to show that there is a clear limit to his anger. He smites, but it is with an "although" and a "yet": he scatters them to a distance, but he sends a promise after them, and says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." In the Lord's hand towards his chosen there may be a rod, but not a sword. It is a heavy rod, but it is not a rod of iron. It is a rod that bruises, but it is not a rod that batters to pieces. God tempers our afflictions, severe though they may seem to be; and though, apparently, he strikes us with the blows of a cruel one, yet there is a depth unutterable of infinite love in every stroke of his hand. His anger endureth but for a night: he hastens to display his favour. Listen to his own words of overflowing faithfulness: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." However, it is clear that God's own people may be under chastisement.

But, secondly, wherever they are, whether they are under chastisement or not, they are where the Lord has put them. Read the text carefully: "Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries." The Lord's hand was in their banishment and dispersion: Jehovah himself inflicted the chastisement for sin. You say to me, "Why, it was Nebuchadnezzar who carried them away: the Babylonians and the Chaldeans took them captive." Yes, I know it was so; but the Lord regards these as instruments in his hand, and he says, "I have done it," just as Job, when the Chaldeans and the Sabeans had swept away his property, and his children had been destroyed through the agency of Satan, yet said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." The Lord was as truly in the taking away as he was in the giving. It is well to look beyond all second causes and instrumentalities. Do not get angry with those who are the nearer agents, but look to the First Cause. Do not get fretting about the Chaldeans and Sabeans. Let them alone, and Satan too. What have you to do with them? Your business is with God. See his hand, and bow before it. Say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Come to that, for then you will be able to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Though your trials be peculiar, and your way be hedged up, yet the hand of the Lord is still in everything; and it behoves you to recognize it for your strengthening and consolation.

Note, next, that the people of God may dwell in places of great discomfort. The Jews were not in those days like the English, who colonize and find a home in the Far West, or even dwell at ease beneath sultry skies. An ancient Hebrew out of his own country was a fish out of water: out of his proper element. He was not like the Tyrian, whose ship went to Tarshish, and passed the Gates of Hercules, seeking the Ultima Thule. The Jew tarried at home. "I dwell among mine own people," said a noble woman of that nation; and she did but speak the mind of a home-loving people who settled each one upon his own patch of ground, and sat down under his vine and fig-tree, none making him afraid. Their Lord had driven them into a distant land, to rivers whose waters were bitter to their lips, even to the Tigris and the Euphrates. They

were in a foreign country, where everything was different from their ways'where all the customs of the people were strange and singular. They would be a marked and despised people, nobody would fraternize with them, but all would pass them by in scorn. The Jews excited much prejudice, for, as their great adversary, the wicked Haman, said, "their laws were diverse from all people," and their customs had a peculiarity about them which kept them a distinct race. It must have been a great discomfort to God's people to dwell among idolaters, and to be forced to witness obscene rites and revolting practices. God's own favoured ones in these days may be living where they are as much out of place as lambs among wolves, or doves among hawks. Do not imagine that God makes a nest of down for all his eaglets. Why, they would never take to flying if he did not put thorns under them, and stir up their nest that they may take to their wings, and learn the heavenward flight to which they are predestinated! Perfect comfort on earth is no more to be expected than constant calm on the sea. Sleep in the midst of a battle, and ease when on the march, would be more in place than absolute rest in this present state. God meaneth not his children to take up their inheritance on this side Jordan. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." And so he often puts us where we are very uncomfortable. Is there any Christian man who can say that he would, if he might, take up his lot for ever in this life? No, no. There is an irksomeness about our condition, disguise it as we may. In one way or another we are made to remember that we are in banishment. We have not yet come unto our rest. That rest "remaineth for the people of God," but as yet we have not come into the land which the Lord our God has given to us to be our place of rest. Some of God's servants feel this in a very peculiar manner, for their soul is among lions, and they dwell among those whose tongues are set on fire of hell. Abel was hated by Cain, Isaac was mocked by Ishmael, Joseph was among envious brethren, Moses was at first rejected by Israel, David was pursued by Saul, Elijah was hunted by Jezebel, Mordecai was hated by Haman; and yet these men were wisely placed, and the Lord was eminently with them. I mention this in order that tried believers may still know that, however uncomfortable their position, it is nevertheless true that God has put them there for some good end.

The beloved of God may yet be in a place of great barrenness as to all spiritual good. "I have cast them far off among the heathen""far off from my temple'far off from the place of my worship'far off from the shrine of my glory. "I have scattered them among the countries," where they will learn no good'where, on the contrary, they will see every abominable thing, and often feel like Lot, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the people among whom he dwelt. We are not kept apart from the wicked by high walls, or guards of heavenly soldiery. Even our Lord did not pray that we should be taken out of the world. Grace builds neither monasteries nor nunneries. "Woe is me," is frequently the cry of God's chosen, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" David knew what it was to be cut off from the assemblies of the Lord's house, and to be in the cave or in the wilderness. It may be so with you, and yet you may be a child of God. You may not be out of your place, for the dear path to his abode may go straight through this barren land. You may have to pass for many a day through this great and terrible wilderness, this land of fiery serpents, and of great drought, on your way to the land that floweth with milk and honey. To make heaven the sweeter we may find our exile made bitter. Our education for eternity may necessitate spiritual tribulation, and bereavement from visible comforts. To be weaned from all reliance on outward means may be for our good, that we may be driven in upon the Lord, and made to know that he is all in all. Doubtless the jeers of Babylon endeared the quiet of Zion to the banished: they loved the courts of the Lord's house all the more for having sighed in the halls of the proud monarch.

Worse still, the Lord's chosen may be under oppression through surrounding ungodliness and sin. The captive Israelites found Babylonia and Chaldea to be a land of grievous oppression. They ridiculed them, and bade them sing them one of the songs of Zion. They required of them mirth when their hearts were

heavy. On the festivals of their false gods they demanded that the worshippers of the Eternal One should help in their choirs, and tune their harps to heathenish minstrelsy. Even Daniel, in his high position under the Persian monarch, found that he was not without adversaries, who rested not till they had cast him into a den of lions. Those who were far away, whether in Babylonia or in Persia, found themselves the constant subjects of assault from the triumphant foe. They were crushed down, until they cried by reason of their oppression. It was not the first time that the people of God had been in the iron furnace. Did they not come forth from the house of bondage at the first, even from Egypt? Neither was Babylon the last place of trial for saints; for until the end of time the seed of the serpent will war with the seed of the woman. Is it not still true of us, as well as of our Saviour, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son"? Expect still to meet with opposition and oppression while you are passing to the land where the seed shall possess the heritage. Those of us who bear public testimony may have to bear the brunt of the battle, and suffer much from angry tongues. Nevertheless, to us it shall be an evident token of the Lord's favour, inasmuch as he counts us worthy to suffer for his name's sake.

But enough of that. I am making a very long story about the grievous routes through which we wend our way to the Celestial City. We climb on hands and knees up the Hill Difficulty; we tremblingly descend the steep of Humiliation. We feel our way through the tremendous pass of the Shadow of Death, and hasten through Vanity Fair, and walk warily across the Enchanted Ground. Not much of the way could one fall in love with. Perhaps the only part of it is that Valley of Humiliation, where the shepherd boy sat down and sang his ditty among the wild flowers and the lambs. One might wish to be always there; but fierce adversaries invade even these tranquil meadows, for hard-by where the shepherd sang his happy pastoral Christian met Apollyon, and had to struggle hard for his life. Do you not remember the spot where

"The man so bravely played the man,

He made the fiend to fly"?

You see where God's people may be, and yet may be none the less, but all the more, under the divine protection. Are you in difficult places? Be not dismayed, for this way runs the road to glory. Sigh not for the dove's wing to hurry to your rest, but take the appointed path: the footsteps of your Lord are there.

II. So, now, I hasten at once into the sweet part of the subject, which consists of this: WHAT GOD WILL BE TO HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY GET INTO THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

Brethren, the great sanctuary stood on Mount Sion, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." That glorious place which Solomon had builded was the shrine to which the Hebrew turned his eye: he prayed with his window open toward Jerusalem. Alas! when the tribes were carried away captive, they could not carry the holy and beautiful house with them, neither could they set up its like within the brazen gates of the haughty city. "Now," says the Lord God in infinite condescension, "I will be a travelling temple to them. I will be as a little sanctuary to each one of them. They shall carry my temple about with them. Wherever they are, I will be, as it were a holy place to them." In using the word "little," the gracious God would seem to say, "I will condescend to them, and I will be as they are. I will bow down to their littleness, and I will be to each little one of them a little sanctuary." Even the temple which Solomon builded was not a fit habitation for the infinite Jehovah, and so the Lord will stoop a little further, and be unto his people, not as the sanctuary "exceedingly magnificent," but as a little temple suitable for the most humble individual, rather than as a great temple in which vast multitudes could gather. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary"

is a greatly condescending promise, implying an infinite stoop of love. There is a good deal more in my text than I shall be able to bring out, and I may seem, in making the attempt, to give you the same thought twice over. Please bear with me. Let me begin at the beginning.

A sanctuary was a place of refuge. You know how Joab fled to the horns of the altar to escape from Solomon's armed men: he ran to the temple hoping to find sanctuary there. In past ages, churches and abbeys and altars have been used as places of sanctuary to which men have fled when in danger of their lives. Take that sense, and couple it with the cities of refuge which were set up throughout all Israel, to which the man who killed another by misadventure might flee to hide himself from the manslayer. Now, beloved fellow-believer, wherever you are, wherever you dwell, God will be to you a constant place of refuge. You shall flee from sin to God in Christ Jesus. You shall flee from an accusing conscience to his pardoning love. You shall flee from daily cares to him who careth for you. You shall flee from the accusations of Satan to the advocacy of Jesus. You shall flee even from yourselves to your Lord, and he will be to you in all senses a place of refuge. This is the happy harbour of all saints in all weathers. Hither come all weather-beaten barques, and cast anchor in placid waters.

"God is our refuge, tried and proved,

Amid a stormy world:

We will not fear though earth be moved,

And hills in ocean hurled,"

O my hearer, make the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, and then shalt thou know the truth of this text: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Wherever thou art cast, God will be to thee a suitable refuge, a little haven for thy little boat: not little in the sense that he cannot well protect thee; not little in the sense that his word is a small truth, or a small comfort, or a small protection, but little in this respect that it shall be near thee, accessible to thee, adapted to thee. It is as though the refuge were portable in all our wanderings, a protection to be carried and kept in hand in all weathers. Thou shalt carry it about with thee wherever thou art, this "little sanctuary." Thy God, and thy thoughts of thy God, and thy faith in thy God, shall be to thee a daily, perpetual, available, present refuge. Oh, it is a delightful thought to my mind, that from every danger and every storm God will be to us an immediate refuge, which we carry about with us, so that we abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

Next, a sanctuary signifies also a place of worship. It is a place where the divine presence is peculiarly manifested—a holy place. It usually means a place where God dwells, a place where God has promised to meet with his people, a place of acceptance where prayers, and praises, and offerings come up with acceptance on his altar. Now, notice, God says to his people, when they are far away from the temple and Jerusalem, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." Not, "I have loved the people, and I will build them a synagogue, or I will lead others to build for them a meeting-place; but I myself will be to them as a little sanctuary." The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the true place of worship for saved souls. "There is no chapel in the place where I live," says one. I am sorry to hear it, but chapels are not absolutely essential to worship, surely. Another cries, "There is no place of public worship of any sort where the gospel is fully and faithfully preached." This is a great want, certainly, but still, do not say, "I am far away from a place of worship." That is a mistake. No godly man is far away from a holy place. What is a place of worship? I hope that our bed-chambers are constantly places of worship. Place of worship? Why, it is one's garden where he walks and meditates. A place of worship? It is the field, the barn, the street, when one has the

heart to pray. God will meet us by a well, a stone, a bush, a brook, a tree. He has great range of trysting-places when men's hearts are right.

"Where'er we seek him he is found,

And every place is hallowed ground."

When a man lives near to God, and abides in him, he should shake off the folly of superstition, and talk no more of holy places. God himself, his own presence makes a place of worship. Do you not catch the fulness of the thought? Yonder is Jacob. He lies down to sleep in a desert place with a stone for his pillow. No bishop had ever been upon the spot to consecrate it, no service had been held in the place by way of dedication, and yet when he awoke in the morning, he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." God had been to his servant a little sanctuary in that instance, as he has been oftentimes since. Whenever you go to sea, God in your cabin shall be to you a little sanctuary. When you travel by railway, the carriage shall, through the Lord's presence, be a little sanctuary. God's presence, seen in a bit of moss, made in the desert for Mungo Park a little sanctuary. How often have the streets of London been to some of us as the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, for God has been there! The Lord himself is the temple of saints in heaven, and he is their temple on earth. When God draws near to us, we worship and rejoice. Whenever we are abroad, and cannot come to the visible sanctuary where multitudes worship, let us ask the Lord to be to us as "a little sanctuary." Have not your hearts cried out as you have thought of this house when you have been far away?"Ziona, Ziona, the place of our solemn assemblies, when shall we return to thee? O sacred spot, where we have worshipped God, and God has met with us, and made the place of his feet glorious, when shall we again behold thee"? I shall not contend with the feeling; but I would supplant it with this higher thought: the Lord himself is our dwelling-place, and our holy temple. Hath he not said, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary"?

Now, go a little farther. Our God is to us a place of stillness. What was the sanctuary of old? The sanctuary was the most holy place, the third court, the innermost of all within the veil. It was the stillest place that ever was on earth: a closet of absolute silence. You must not think of the tabernacle in the wilderness as being a huge building. It was a small affair, and the innermost room of all was of narrow dimensions. The Holy of Holies was great for holiness, but not for space. There was this peculiarity about it, that it was the shrine of unbroken quiet. Was ever a voice heard in it? Once in the year the high-priest went in, and filled it full of the smoke of incense as he waved his censor in the mystic presence; but otherwise it was a chamber in which there was no footfall of living thing, or voice of mortal man. Here was the home of absolute quiet and silence. The stillness within the Holy of Holies of the temple must have reached the intensity of awe. What repose one might enjoy who could dwell in the secret place of the Most High! How one sighs for stillness! We cannot get it to the full anywhere in this country: even to the loneliest hill-top the scream of the railway-engine rises to the ear. Utter and entire stillness, one of the richest joys on this side heaven, one cannot readily obtain. Those who live in the wear and tear of this city life'and it is an awful wear and tear'might well pay down untold gold to be still for a while. What would we not give for quiet, absolute quiet, when everything should be still, and the whirring wheels of care should cease to revolve for at least a little while?

I sometimes propose to myself to wait upon God and be still. Alas! There is the bell! Who is this? Somebody that will chatter for a quarter of an hour about nothing! Well, that intruder has gone; let us pray. We are on our knees. What is this? A telegram! One is half frightened at the very sight of it: it is opened,

and it calls you away to matters which are the reverse of quieting. Where is stillness to be had? The only prescription I can give is this promise: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary." If you can get with God, you will then escape from men, even though you have to live among them. If you can baptize your spirit into the great deeps of Godhead, if you can take a plunge into the fathomless love of the covenant, if you can rise to commune with God, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend, then will he be unto you as a little sanctuary, and you shall enjoy that solemn silence of the soul which hath music in it like the eternal harmonies. The presence of the Lord will be as a calm hand for that fevered brow, and a pillow for that burdened head. Use your God in this way, for so he presents himself to you.

The sanctuary was a place of mercy. When the high-priest entered within the veil, he passed into the throne-room of mercy. The blood had been sprinkled there, and man might draw near to the God of mercy. A light was shining—a light of love and mercy, between the wings of the cherubim. Those angelic forms were ministers of mercy, attendants upon the Lord of grace. Before the high-priest stood the mercy-seat. That was the name of the cover of the sacred ark of the covenant. On that mercy-seat there was the shechinah, which symbolized the presence of a merciful God. Of that mercy-seat the Lord had said, "There will I meet with you." The holy place was a house of mercy. God was not there in power to destroy, nor in subtle wisdom to discover folly: he was there in mercy, waiting to forgive. Now, dear friends, God says, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary," that is to say, an accessible throne of mercy, an accessible place of mercy. When men have no mercy on you, go to God. When you have no mercy on yourself—and sometimes you have not—run away to God. Draw near to him, and he will be to you as a little sanctuary.

The sanctuary was the house of mercy, and hence, a place of condescension—"a little sanctuary." Brethren, to suit our needs the blessings of grace must be given in little forms. What are we great in at all except in sin? We hear of "great men." O friends, a great man! Does not the term make you laugh? Did you ever hear of a great ant, or a great emmet, or a great nothing? And that is all that the greatest of us can ever be. Our degrees and ranks are only shades of littleness; that is all. When the Lord communes with the greatest of men, he must become little to speak with him.

I cannot convey to you quite what I see to be the meaning of this little sanctuary, laying the stress upon the adjective "little." If you are talking of anything that is very dear, the tendency is always to call it "little." The affectionate terms of language are frequently diminutives. One never says, "My dear great wife," but we are apt to say, "My dear little wife." We speak thus of things which are not "little" really, but we use the word as a term of affection. To speak very simply, there is a cosiness about a little thing which we miss in that which is on a large scale. We say, "Well, I did so enjoy that little prayer-meeting; but when it grew so much in numbers I seemed lost in it." It is to me so marvellous that I hardly dare to say what I mean; but when the Lord brings himself down to our capacity he is greatly dear to us, and he would have us feel at home with him, comfortable with him. When he becomes to us "as a little sanctuary," and we are able to compass his mercy to ourselves, and perceive its adaptation to our little trials and little difficulties, then we feel ourselves at home with him, and he is most dear to us. O thou blessed God, thou art so great, that thou must, as it were, belittle thyself to manifest thyself to me; how I love and adore thee that thou wilt deign to do this! Glory be to thy great name, though the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, yet thou dwellest in the temple of my poor heart!

Dear brethren, the sanctuary was only a little place. But then, if it had been ever so great—if it had been as spacious as this whole island, and had been shut in to be the house of God—would it have been a house fitted to contain the infinite God? If you take the arch of heaven as a roof, and floor it with the sea, or if you soar into still more boundless space, is that a house fit for him who filleth all immensity? When Jehovah

makes himself little enough to be in the least comprehended by us, the descent is immeasurable. It is nothing more to him to come down to count the hairs of our head than to bow in the infinity of his mercy to take an interest in our littlenesses.

Go a stage further. That sanctuary, of which we read in the Old Testament, was not only a place of great stillness, great mercy, and great condescension but it was a place of great holiness. "Holiness becometh thy house." This applied to the whole temple, but the inner shrine was called "sanctum sanctorum" the Holy of Holies, for so the Hebrews make a superlative. It was the holiest place that could be. The world is an unholy place, and at times it is most grievously so. You mix up with people who defile you; how can you help it? Your daily business calls you to see and hear many things which are defiling. When these things are more than ordinarily glaring, you say to yourself, "Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might get away from the very sight of men!" I was with a mountain-climbing friend some time ago, and being thirsty, I drank some water from a fountain by the roadside. When I held the cup to my companion, he refused it, saying, "I don't drink that." I said, "Why don't you drink it?" He answered, "I wait till I have climbed up into the mountains, where mortal men never pollute the streams, and then I drink. I like drinking of fountains at which none but birds sip: where the stream pours forth from God's hand pure as crystal." Alas! I cannot climb with my Alpine friend as to material things; but what a blessed thing it is to get right away from man, and drink of the river of God which is full of water, and know the joys of his own right hand, which are for evermore! What bliss to enter into the Holy of Holies! Now, you cannot do that by getting into a cell, or by shutting yourselves up in your room; but you can enter the most holy place by communion with God. Here is the promise; the text means this "I will be to them as a little sanctuary a little Holy of Holies. I will put them into myself as into the most holy place, and there will I hide them. In the secret of my tabernacle will I hide them. I will set them up upon a rock." Away from the unholiness of your own hearts, and the unholiness of those about you, get to your God, and hide yourselves in him.

Again, we may regard the sanctuary as a place of cleansing. That may be gathered from the other rendering of my text. "I will be unto them a little sanctification." God is the sanctification of his people he cleanses them from daily defilements, and is himself their righteousness. Those that come to God shall find in him sanctification for the daily acts of life, cleansing from ordinary as well as extraordinary transgression. We want not only the great blood-washing, but also the lesser washing of the feet with water; and the Lord himself will give us this blessing. Did not Jesus take a towel, and gird himself for this very purpose?

Lastly, God will be to us a place of communion and of revelation. In the Holy of Holies God spoke with man, on that one day in the year, in a wondrous manner; and he that had been there, and came forth alive, came out to bless the congregation. Every day of the year the teaching of the sanctuary was that in God there was everything his people wanted. In the holy place was the shechinah light, and "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "The Lord is my light and my salvation." In the holy place were the cherubim: God has legions of angels at his bidding, waiting to bless his people. In the holy place was the ark: God is to us the ark of the covenant. He has entered into covenant with men, towards us he has a throne of grace, and there he meets us, even in Christ Jesus, who is our propitiation.

Within that ark there were three things: the rod of Aaron, that divine work of Christ which always buds; the pot of manna, the emblem and token of the living bread whereon his people feed; and the tablets of the law unbroken, in all their splendour, whereby the saints are justified. O brethren, if you want anything, if you want everything, go to God for it! He will be to you as a little sanctuary; that is to say, he will bring to you everything which was inside that holy place. Though but one piece of furniture, yet that ark of the

covenant did really contain in itself, and round about it, all that the heirs of God can ever need while in this wilderness. Let this be a joy to you this day. Do not rely upon the creature. "All men are liars," said David; and he was not far out. Broken cisterns abound on all sides; why waste your time on them? Get you straight away to your Creator, and find your all in him. If this day you are wrapped up in the things that are seen and temporal, may God deliver you therefrom, for all these things will melt as you hold them in your hand! The joys of this life are like the ice palace of Montreal, which is fair to look upon while the winter lasts, but it all dissolves as the spring comes on. All things round about us here are myths and dreams. This is the land of fancies and of shadows. Pray God to get you out of them, and that you may find in him your sanctuary, and indeed all that you want.

If at this time you have lost many of the comforts of this life, and seem bereaved of friends, then find in God your "little sanctuary." Go home to your chamber with holy faith and humble love, and take him to be your all in all, and he will be all in all to you. Pray after this fashion—"O Lord, so work in me by thy Spirit that I may find thee in all things, and all things in thee!"

The Lord has ways of weaning us from the visible and the tangible, and bringing us to live upon the invisible and the real, in order to prepare us for that next stage, that better life, that higher place, where we shall really deal with eternal things only. God blows out our candles, and makes us find our light in him, to prepare us for that place in which they need no candle, for the glory of God is their light; and where, strange to tell, they have no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. The holy leads to the holiest: living upon God here leads to living with God hereafter. Oh, that God would gradually lift us up above all the outward, above all the visible, and bring us more and more into the inward and unseen! If you do not know anything about this, ask the Lord to teach you this riddle; and if you do know it, ask him to keep you to the life and walk of faith, and never may you be tempted to quit it for the way of sight and feeling. For Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'Ezekiel 11.

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