

Foretastes of the Heavenly Life

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that Christians can experience foretaste blessings of Heaven on earth through security, rest, service, victory, and acceptance in God.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 1:25, Hebrews 4:3, Psalm 23:4, John 10:28, Romans 8:38-39

Topics: "Heavenly Life", "Perseverance of the Saints", "Christian Service"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores how Christians can experience foretaste blessings of Heaven even while living on earth. He highlights five key aspects of heavenly life: security, rest, service, victory, and acceptance with God. Through vivid illustrations and biblical teaching, Spurgeon encourages believers to recognize these blessings as glimpses of their eternal home and to live in the joyful assurance of their salvation.

Transcript

"And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the Lord our God does give us." Deuteronomy 1:25.

You remember the occasion concerning which these words were written. The children of Israel sent 12 men as spies into the land of Canaan and they brought back with them the fruit of the land, among which was a bunch of grapes from Eshcol too heavy to be borne by one man, and which, therefore, two of them carried on a staff between them. I shall not say much, at this time, concerning the Israelites, but I want to show you that as they learned something of what Canaan was like by the fruit of the land brought to them by the spies, so you and I, even while we are on earth, if we are the Lord's chosen people, may learn something of what Heaven is—the state to which we are to attain hereafter—by certain blessings which are brought to us even while we are here.

The Israelites were sure that Canaan was a fertile land when they saw the fruit of it which was brought by their brothers and when they ate some. Perhaps there was but little for so many and yet those who did eat were made at once to understand that it must have been a goodly soil that produced such fruit. In like manner, Beloved, we who love the Lord Jesus Christ have had clusters of the grapes of a better Eshcol—we have had some of the fruits of Heaven even while we have been on earth and by them we are able to judge of the richness of the soil of Paradise which brings forth such rare and choice delights.

I shall, therefore, present to you a series of views of Heaven in order to give you some idea how it is that the Christian on earth enjoys a foretaste of the blessings that are yet to be revealed. Possibly there are scarcely two Christians who have exactly the same ideas concerning Heaven, though they all expect the same Heaven, yet the most prominent feature in it is different to each mind according to its constitution

I. Now, I will confess to you what is, to me, the most prominent feature of Heaven, judging at the present moment. At another time, I may love Heaven better for another thing, but, just lately, I have learned to love Heaven as A PLACE OF SECURITY.

We have been greatly saddened as we have seen some professors dishonoring their profession—yes, and worse, still, some of the Lord's own beloved committing grievous faults and slips which have brought disgrace upon their character and injury to their souls. And we have learned to look up to Heaven as a place where we shall never, never sin—where our feet shall be fixed firmly upon the Rock—where there is neither tripping nor slipping—where faults shall be unknown—where we shall have no need to keep watch against an indefatigable enemy because there is no foe that shall annoy us—where we shall not be on our guard day or night watching against the incursion of foes, for, "there the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest." We have looked upon Heaven as the land of complete security, where the garment shall be always white, where the face shall be always anointed with fresh oil, where there is no fear of our turning away from our Lord, for there we shall stand fast forever! And I ask you, if that is a true view of Heaven— and I am sure it is one feature of it—do not the saints, even on earth, in this sense, enjoy some fruits of Paradise? Do we not, even in these huts and villages below, sometimes taste the joys of blissful security? The Doctrine of God's Word is that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe, that all Believers must hold on their way, that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find Him a faithful and Immutable Keeper. Believing this Doctrine, we enjoy security even on earth—not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip and trip, but, nevertheless, a security well-nigh as great because it secures us against ultimate ruin and renders us certain that we shall attain to eternal happiness!

And, Beloved, have you ever sat down and reflected on the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints? I am sure you have and God has brought home to you a sense of your security in the Person of Christ. He has told you that your name is engraved on His hand. He has whispered in your ear the promise, "Fear you not, for I am with you." You have been led to look upon the great Surety of the Covenant as faithful and true and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the Throne of God! And in such a sweet contemplation I am sure you have been drinking some of the juice of His spiced pomegranates, you have had some of the choice fruits of Paradise, you have had some of the enjoyments which the perfect saints above have in a sense of your complete and eternal security in Christ Jesus. Oh, how I love that Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints! I shall at once renounce the pulpit when I cannot preach it, for any other form of teaching seems to me to be a black desert and a howling wilderness, as unworthy of God as it would be beneath even my acceptance, frail worm as I am! I could never either believe or preach a Gospel which saves me today and rejects me tomorrow—a Gospel which puts me in Christ's family one hour, and makes me a child of the devil the next—a Gospel which first justifies and then condemns me—a Gospel which pardons me and afterwards casts me down to Hell. Such a Gospel is abhorrent to reason, itself! Much more is it contrary to the mind of the God whom we delight to serve. Every true Believer in Jesus can sing, with Toplady—

"My name from the palms of His hand

Eternity will not erase!

Impressed on His heart it remains

In marks of indelible Grace.

Yes, I to the end shall endure,

As sure as the earnest is given,

More happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in Heaven." Yes, Beloved, we enjoy a sense of perfect security even as we dwell in this land of wars and fighting. As the spies brought to their brethren in the wilderness bunches of the grapes of Canaan, so, in the security we enjoy, we have a foretaste and earnest of the bliss of Paradise!

II. In the next place, most probably the greater part of you love to think of Heaven under another aspect, as A PLACE OF PERFECT REST.

Son of toil, you love the sanctuary because it is there you sit to hear God's Word and rest your wearied limbs. When you have wiped the hot sweat from your burning brow, you have often thought of Heaven as the place where your labors shall be over and you have sung with sweet emphasis—

"There shall I bathe my weary soul

In seas of heavenly rest,

And not a wave of trouble will roll

Across my peaceful breast."

Rest, rest, rest—this is what you need—and to me, also, this idea of Heaven is exceedingly beautiful. Rest I know I never shall have beneath this sky while Christ's servants continue to be so unreasonable as they are. I have served them to the utmost of my power, yet I am well-nigh hounded to my grave by Christian ministers perpetually wanting me to do impossibilities that they know no mortal strength can accomplish! Willing am I to labor till I drop, but I cannot do more than I am doing. Yet I am perpetually assailed on this side and the other, till, go where I may, there seems no rest for me till I slumber in my grave—and I look forward to Heaven, with great happiness, because there I shall rest from labors constant and arduous, though much loved.

And you, too, dear Christian Friends who have been toiling long to gain an object you have eagerly sought—you will be glad when you get to Heaven. You have said that if you could attain your desire, you would gladly lie down and rest. You have longed to lay up a certain amount of riches. You have said that if you could once gain a pension, you would then make yourself at ease. Or you have been laboring long to secure a certain position and you have said that if you could only reach it, you would rest. Yes, but you have not reached it yet—and you love to think of Heaven because it is the goal to the racer, the target of the arrow of existence, the couch of repose for time's tired toilers! Yes, an eternal rest for the poor weary struggler upon earth. You love it because it is a place of rest—and do we ever enjoy a foretaste of Heaven upon earth in that sense? Oh, yes, Beloved! Blessed be God, "we who have believed do enter into rest." Our peace is like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea. God does give rest to His people

even here—"there remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God." We have stormy trials and bitter troubles in the world, but we have learned to say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Did you ever, in times of great distress, climb up to your closet and there, on your knees, pour out your heart before God? Did you ever feel, after you had so done, that you had, as it were, bathed yourself in rest, so that—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,

And storms of sorrow fall,"

you cared not one whit for them? Though wars and tumults were raging around you, you were kept in perfect peace, for you had found a great protecting shield in Christ. You were able to remain restful and calm, for you had looked upon the face of God's Anointed!

Ah, Christian, that rest, so placid and serene, without a billow of disturbance, which in your deepest troubles you have been enabled to enjoy upon the bosom of Christ, is to you like a bunch from the vintage of Heaven, one grape of the heavenly cluster of which you shall soon partake in the land of the hereafter! Thus, again, you see, we can have a foretaste of Heaven and realize what it is even while we are here upon earth.

III. That idea of Heaven as a place of rest will just suit some indolent professors, so I will turn the subject around and show you that the very opposite idea is also true, and may be more useful to certain people. I believe that one of the worst sins of which a man can be guilty is to be idle. I could almost forgive a drunk, rather than a lazy man. He who is idle has as good reason to be penitent before God as David had when he was an adulterer. Indeed, David's adultery probably resulted from his idleness. It is an abominable thing to let the grass grow up to your knees and do nothing towards making it into hay. God never sent a man into the world to be idle—but there are some who make a profession of being Christians who do nothing to serve the Lord from one year's end to the other.

A true idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF UNINTERRUPTED SERVICE. It is a land where they serve God day and night in His Temple and never know weariness, and never require slumber. Do you know, dear Friends, the deliciousness of work? Although I must complain when people expect impossibilities of me, it is the highest enjoyment of my life to be busily engaged for Christ. Tell me the day when I do not preach—I will tell you the day in which I am not happy! And the day in which it is my privilege to preach the Gospel and labor for God is generally the day of my peaceful and quiet enjoyment after all. Service is delight! Praising God is pleasure. Laboring for Him is the highest bliss a mortal can know. Oh, how sweet it must be to sing His praises and never feel that the throat is dry! Oh, how blessed to flap the wings forever and never feel them tire! Oh, what sweet enjoyment to fly upon His errands forevermore, to circle round the Throne of God in Heaven while eternity shall last and never once lay the head on the pillow, never once feel the throbbing of fatigue, never once the pangs that admonish us that we need to cease, but to keep on forever like eternity's own self—a broad river rolling on with perpetual floods of labor! Oh, that must be enjoyment! That must be Heaven, to serve God day and night in His Temple! Many of you have served God on earth and have had foretastes of that bliss.

I wish some of you knew more of the sweets of labor, for although labor breeds sweat, it breeds sweets, too—more especially labor for Christ. There is a satisfaction before the work. There is a satisfaction in the work. There is a satisfaction after the work and there is a satisfaction in looking for the fruits of the work! And a great satisfaction when we get the fruits! Labor for Christ is, indeed, the dressing room of Heaven. If

it is not Heaven, itself, it is one of the most blissful foretastes of it. Thank God, Christian, if you can do anything for your Master! Thank Him if it is your privilege to do the least thing for Him! But remember, in so doing, He is giving you a taste of the grapes of Eshcol! But you lazy people do not get the grapes of Eshcol because you are too lazy to carry the big bunches. You would like them to come into your mouths without the trouble of gathering them! You do not care to go forth and serve God. You sit still and look after yourselves, but what do you do for other people? You go to your place of worship—you talk about your Sunday school and Sick Visitation Society, yet you never teach in the Sunday school and you never visit a sick person—you take a great deal of credit to yourself while you do nothing at all! You cannot expect to know much of the enjoyments of heavenly Glory until you have experienced a little of the delight of working in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

IV. Another view of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF COMPLETE VICTORY AND GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. This is the battlefield—there is the triumphal procession. This is the land of the sword and the spear—there is the land of the wreath and the crown. This is the land of the garment rolled in blood and of the dust of the fight—there is the land of the trumpet's joyful sound, there is the place of the white robe and of the shout of conquest! Oh, what a thrill of joy shall shoot through the hearts of all the blessed when their conquests shall be complete in Heaven, when death, itself, the last of foes, shall be slain, when Satan shall be dragged captive at the chariot wheels of Christ, when Jesus shall have overthrown sin and trampled corruption as the mire of the streets, when the great song of universal victory shall rise from the hearts of all the redeemed! What a moment of pleasure shall that be!

But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I have foretastes of even that joy. We know what conflicts, what soul-battles we have even here—did you never struggle against unbelief and at last overcome it? Oh, with what joy did you lift your eyes to Heaven, the tears flowing down your cheeks, and say, "Lord, I bless You that I have been able to vanquish that sin." Did you ever meet a strong temptation and wrestle hard with it, and know what it was to sing with great joy, "My feet well-nigh slipped; but Your mercy held me up"? Have you, like Bunyan's Christian, fought with old Apollyon and have you seen him flap his dragon wings and fly away? There you had a foretaste of Heaven! There you had just a hint of what the ultimate victory will be! In the death of that one Philistine, you saw the destruction of the whole army. That Goliath who fell through your sling and stone was but one out of the multitude who must yield their bodies to the fowls of Heaven. God gives you partial triumphs that they may be the earnest of ultimate and complete victory! Go on and conquer, and let each conquest, though a harder one and more strenuously contested, be to you as a grape of Eshcol, a foretaste of the joys of Heaven!

V. Furthermore, without doubt, one of the best views we can ever give of Heaven is that it is A STATE OF COMPLETE ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD recognized and felt in the conscience. I suppose that a great part of the joy of the blessed saints consists in a knowledge that there is nothing in them to which God is hostile—that their peace with God has not anything to mar it—that they are so completely in union with the principles and thoughts of the Most High that His love is set on them, that their love is set on Him, and they are one with Him in every respect. Well, Beloved, and have we not enjoyed a sense of acceptance here below? Blotted and blurred by many doubts and fears, yet there have been moments when we have known ourselves as truly accepted as we shall know ourselves to be even when we stand before the Throne of God! There have been bright days with some of us, when we could set to our seal that God was true and when, afterwards, feeling that "the Lord knows them that are His," we could say, "And we know that we are His, too." Then have we known the meaning of Dr. Watts when he sang—

"When I can say, 'My God is mine,' When I can feel Your glories shine, I tread the world beneath my feet
And all that earth calls good or great. While such a scene of sacred joys Our raptured eyes and souls
employ, Here we could sit and gaze sway A long, an everlasting day."

We had such a clear view of the perfection of Christ's righteousness that we felt that God had accepted us
and we could not be otherwise than happy! We had such a sense of the efficacy of the blood of Christ that
we felt sure our sins were all pardoned and could never be mentioned against us forever!

And, Beloved, though I have spoken of other joys, let me say this is the cream of all of them—to know
ourselves accepted in God's sight. Oh, to feel that I, a guilty worm, am now at rest in my Father's bosom!
That I, a lost prodigal, am now feasting at His table with delight! That I, who once heard the voice of His
anger, now listen to the notes of His love! This is a joy that is worth more than all worlds! What more can
they know up there than that? And were it not that our sense of it is so imperfect, we might bring Heaven
down to earth and might at least dwell in the suburbs of the celestial city if we could not be privileged to go
within the gates!

So you see, again, we can have, in that sense, bunches of the grapes of Eshcol. Seeing that Heaven is a
state of acceptance, we, too, can know and feel that acceptance and rejoice in it.

VI. And again, Heaven is A STATE OF GREAT AND GLORIOUS MANIFESTATIONS. As you look
forward to your experience in Heaven, you sing—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know All I desired or wished below. And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

You are now looking at it darkly, through a glass, but there you shall see face to face. Christ looks down
on the Bible, and the Bible is His looking glass. You look into it and see the face of Christ as in a mirror,
darkly. But soon you shall look upon Him face to face. You expect Heaven to be a place of peculiar
manifestations. You believe that there Jesus will unveil His face to you, that—

"Millions of years your wondering eyes Shall over your Savior's beauties rove."

You are expecting to see His face and never, never sin. You are longing to know the secrets of His heart.
You believe that, in that day you shall see Him as He is, and shall be like He in the world of spirits. Well,
Beloved, though Christ does not manifest Himself to us as He does to the bright ones there, have we not
had blessed manifestations even while we have been in this vale of tears ? Speak, Believer! Let your heart
speak—have you not had visions of Calvary? Has not your Master sometimes touched your eyes with eye
salve and let you see Him on His Cross? Have you not said—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,

Which before the Cross I spend,

Life, and health, and peace possessing,

From the sinner's dying Friend.

Here I'll sit forever viewing

Mercy's streams, in streams of blood—

Precious drops! My soul bedewing,

Plead and claim my peace with God"? Have you not wept both for joy and for grief when you beheld Him nailed to the tree for your sakes and saw Him bleeding out His life for you ? Oh, yes! I know you have had such manifestations of Him! And have you not seen Him in His risen glories? Have you not beheld Him exalted on His Throne? Have you not, by faith, beheld Him as the Judge of the quick and the dead? And as the Prince of the kings of the earth? Have you not looked through the dim future and seen Him with the crown of all kingdoms on His head, with the diadems of all monarchs beneath His feet, and the scepters of all thrones in His hand? Have you not anticipated the moment of His most glorious triumphs, when—

"He shall reign from pole to pole,

With illimitable sway?"

Yes, you have, and therein you have had foretastes of Heaven. When Christ has thus revealed Himself to you, you have looked within the veil and, therefore, you have seen what is there. You have had some glimpses of Jesus while here— those glimpses of Jesus are but the beginning of what shall never end! Those joyous melodies of praise and thanksgiving are but the preludes of the songs of Paradise!

VII. Lastly, the highest idea of Heaven is that it is A PLACE OF MOST HALLOWED AND BLISSFUL COMMUNION. I have not given you even half that I might have told you of the various characteristics of Heaven as described in God's Word, but communion is the best. Communion! That word so little spoken of, so seldom understood. Blessed word, communion! Dearly-Beloved, you hear us say, "And the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," but there are many of you who do not know the meaning of that sweet Heaven in a word—communion! It is the flower of language! It is the honeycomb of words—communion! You like to talk of corruption best, do you not? Well, if you like that ugly word, you are very willing to meditate upon it. I do so when I am forced to do it, but communion seems to me to be a far sweeter word than that! You like to talk a great deal about affliction, do you not? Well, if you love that black word—you may have reason to love it—and if you care to be happy about it, you may do so. But give me for my constant text and for my constant joy, communion, and I will not choose which kind of communion it shall be!

Sweet Master, if You give me communion with You in Your sufferings. If I have to bear reproach and shame for Your name's sake, I will thank You if I may have fellowship with You in it! And if You will privilege me to suffer for Your sake, I will call it an honor, so that I can be a partaker of Your sufferings! And if You give me sweet enjoyments, if You raise me up and allow me to sit with You in heavenly places in Christ, I will bless You! I will bless God for ascension-communion—communion with Christ in His glories! Do you not say the same? And for communion with Christ in death—have you died unto the world, as Christ died unto it? Then have you had communion with Him in resurrection? Have you been raised to newness of life, even as He was raised from the grave? And have you had communion with Him in His ascension, so that you know yourself to be an heir to a throne in Glory? If so, you have had the best earnest you can receive of the joys of Paradise! To be in Heaven is to lean one's head upon the breast of Jesus—have you not done that on earth? Then you know what Heaven is! To be in Heaven is to talk to Jesus, to sit at His feet, to let our heart beat against His heart. If you have had that bliss on earth, you have already tasted some of the grapes of Heaven!

Cherish, then, these foretastes of whatever kind they may have been in your individual case. Differently constituted, you will all look at Heaven in a different light. Keep your foretaste just as God gave it to you.

He has given each of you a separate experience of it which is most suitable to your own condition. Treasure it up! Think much of it, but think more of your Master, for, remember, it is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," that is your best foretaste of Heaven! And the more you realize that blessed Truth of God, the more fully prepared shall you be for the bliss of the joyous ones in the land of the happy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GENESIS 49.

Verses 1-3. And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together and hear, you sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. All this was to Reuben's advantage, yet he was spoiled through one fault.

4. Unstable as water, you shall not excel So it is clear that the greatest strength and dignity and power will not serve a man so as to make him excel if he is unstable. There are many such persons still remaining in the world. Their doctrine changes like the moon and we never know what it is. Their spirit and temper constantly change. Their pursuits are sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another. They are, "everything by starts, and nothing long," and to each of them it may be said, "Unstable as water, you shall not excel."

4-7. Because you went up to your father's bed, then defled it: he went up to my couch. Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not into their secret; into their assembly, my honor, be not united: for in their anger they slew a man and in their self-will they dug down a wall Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel It is a very remarkable circumstance, well worthy of notice, that this curse was turned into a real blessing, especially in the case of the tribe of Levi. It is true that they were divided and scattered, like handfuls of salt, throughout the whole of Israel, for they were attendants upon the Lord's priests and they had cities appointed to them so that while they dwelled here, and there, and everywhere, it was in order that they might reach the whole of the people and prove a blessing to them. Are any of you laboring under a very serious disadvantage? Does it look to you like a curse? Then pray to God to make it into a blessing! I believe that often the worst thing that can happen to Christian men is really the best thing, for, while Nature would cry out, "The clouds are to be dreaded," Grace can reply—

"The clouds you so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head."

8. Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise. His name was praise and such was his history to be, for David came of that tribe, and great David's greater Son, whom it is our joy to praise!

8. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. While that was true of Judah, it is still more true of Him who sprang out of Judah, even our Lord and King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah!

9. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse him? Our Lord overcame His enemies even in the thicket of this world. And all power is given unto Him now that He has "gone up" again into His Glory. Let that man beware who would attack this Lion of the tribe of Judah—"Who shall rouse Him?" If you persecute His followers, you will rouse Him. If you deny His Truth, trample on the Doctrine of Atonement and reject His love, you will rouse Him! But beware in that day, for terrible is the King of Judah when He is once aroused!

Therefore, submit yourselves to Him—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

10. The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be. When did the dominion depart from Judah till the Lord Jesus came as the Sent One? And unto Him, to this very day, the people gather and more and more shall gather in the latter days.

11. 12. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice wine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. It was literally so with Judah, but it is gloriously so with our Lord to this day. It was His blood which yielded the juice of those rare clusters of the choice vine and now, with garments dyed with His own blood, He comes from Edom, for He has trodden down His foes, and He cries, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me."

13. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Sidon. So did Zebulun dwell even until the day when our Lord came, for Matthew writes concerning Him, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

14, 15. Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: and he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute. This was a poor character for Issachar to possess. It was a tame-spirited tribe that loved rest and ease and, therefore, did not fight with the common foe. Issachar crouched down between the burdens instead of taking them up and bearing them! God grant that none of us may be of that lazy tribe! I think that I know some who are—they could do a great deal, but they see that rest is good and the land is pleasant—so they idle away their days.

16, 17. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. Dan is noted among the tribes for its famous leap, capturing that distant part of the country for itself. Here good old Jacob, worn out by what he had already said, exhausted by the ecstasy into which as a Prophet he had been cast, paused awhile and panted.

18. I have waited for Your salvation, O LORD. But He soon resumed His prophecy—

19. Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. Many of God's servants belong to this tribe, for their life is spent in conflict. They do not seek it, but it comes to them and, for a time, they seem to be overcome, yet let them clutch at the promise given to Gad.

20. Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. Well fed and then yielding correspondingly. There are some people who like to have their bread to be fat, but they yield to the King no dainties. Let it not be so with us, but let us both feed well and yield well.

21. Naphtali is a hind let loose. The type of what a Christian minister should be—indeed, what every Christian worker should be—"a hind let loose," one who can say with David, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds."

21. He gives goodly words. He has liberty in speech, freedom of utterance. He is not in bonds, he is as "a hind let loose."

22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well Where he can suck up abundant nutriment—

22. Whose branches run over the wall. He does more than he is expected to do. Nothing seems to content him, his "branches run over the wall."

23. 24. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength. You know how sorely Joseph was persecuted by his brothers, yet how the Lord was with him in all his troubles. It appears from these words that he was, himself, an archer, and that he was not in a hurry to shoot his arrows—his bow remained still. It is the strong who can afford to be quiet. As you go across the village green, a goose will hiss at you, while the strong ox lies down calmly and takes no notice of you—"His bow abode in strength."

24. And the arms of his hands. Not only his hands, but the arms of his hands—

24-27. Were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel) even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lie under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors into the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. Benjamin is a ravenous wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. Little Benjamin is the last of the tribes.

28-33. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spoke unto them, and blessed them; everyone according to his blessing he blessed them. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca, his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. It is a very sweet thing to die with a blessing on your lips. And it is equally good to live in the same spirit. Our Lord Jesus was blessing His disciples when He was taken from them—and since we do not know when we shall be taken away from our relatives, let us be always blessing them. May the Lord, who has blessed us, make us a blessing to others!

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