

Mourning at the Cross

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true godly sorrow and repentance come from the Holy Spirit's work, beginning with a heartfelt looking to Christ who was pierced for our sins.

Scripture: Zechariah 12:10, Isaiah 50:3,6, Isaiah 50:6

Topics: "Repentance", "Christ's Atonement", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In 'Mourning at the Cross,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound biblical truth that true repentance and godly sorrow are gifts from the Holy Spirit, initiated by looking to Christ who was pierced for our sins. Spurgeon unpacks the fulfillment of prophecy in Christ's crucifixion and emphasizes that genuine mourning for sin is inseparable from faith and prayer. This sermon challenges believers to understand repentance as a lifelong journey empowered by grace and to anticipate the future repentance of Israel. It is a powerful call to behold Jesus and be transformed by His love and sacrifice.

Transcript

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem this Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Zechariah 12:10.

NOTICE in this verse the very remarkable change of persons which you find in it, for you have, first, the first person, and then, the third—"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." It is the same Person who speaks in each case and He is speaking concerning Himself in both instances, so it is very remarkable that He should first say, "Me," and then say, "Him." What is this but another illustration of the Unity of the Godhead and yet the Trinity of the adorable Persons in it? Notice that the One who, in this chapter, speaks of Himself as, "Me" and "Him," is none other than Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth. Read the first verse—"The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, says the Lord, which stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." The Creator of the heavens and the Creator of our spirit is the same Person who was pierced, and who says, "They shall look upon Me." Yet there is a distinction, for we next read, "They shall mourn for Him" Jesus Christ is God and, therefore, so speaks of Himself. Yet He is also Man and, therefore, He is spoken of in the third person.

There are other instances in which the Divine and Human in Christ Jesus are spoken of in a very remarkable manner. Turn, for instance, to the 50th Chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah at the 3rd verse—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." No one but God could truly say that. Now turn to the 6th verse. I need not read the two intervening verses, but I will put the 3rd and the 6th together—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering...I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Can you realize the tremendous descent from the Godhead of Him who clothes the heavens with blackness and covers them with sackcloth, to the Manhood of Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? That is another illustration of the Truth of God which is so singularly implied in our text where we read that "Jehovah, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him," also says, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced."

The next point I want you to notice is the remarkable fact that Jesus Christ was crucified and pierced. Did it ever strike you as being very singular that He should have been pierced? When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, he said to them, "Take Him, and judge Him according to your law." Would you not have supposed that the Jews, on hearing that, would at once have seized the opportunity of putting Christ to death according to their law? They accused Jesus of blasphemy, saying, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." You know that the death ordained by the Law of Moses for a blasphemer was by stoning. And if I had not read any of the Old Testament prophecies, or the New Testament narrative, I would have felt morally certain that when Pilate said, "Take Him, and judge Him according to your law," they would have taken Him away and stoned Him to death! And I would have felt all the more certain that this would be the case because such was the animosity and hatred of the high priests against Him that I would have thought that each one of them would have wanted to cast the first stone at Him.

But when He was sentenced to be crucified, the act of putting Him to death was left to the Roman soldiers! And it is, to me, very surprising that as the Jews had an opportunity of stoning Him, themselves, they did not avail themselves of it. Why was this? Why, because this ancient prophecy had said, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." And because another still more ancient prophecy had said, "They pierced My hands and My feet." Therefore Jesus Christ must die by crucifixion—not by stoning!

There is another very notable thing in connection with this prophecy. The piercing of the hands and feet of Christ by the nails, might, perhaps, not seem sufficient to carry out the idea of the prophecy—"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." So, when our Lord hung upon the Cross—when "He was dead already"—as the Roman soldiers said when they came around to break the legs of the criminals to put an end to their sufferings, one of the soldiers who had never read the Old Testament and knew nothing about what was written there—probably just to gratify his heart's cruel instinct—takes his spear and thrusts it into the heart of Christ! "And forthwith came there out blood and water." Now, if that had been done by someone who knew about the prophecy, it might have been said that there was some collusion to fulfill the prophetic Scriptures. But, as this Roman soldier was a barbarian who did not believe at all in the Jewish Scriptures, is it not a remarkable thing that this prophecy was fulfilled through his spear being thrust into the heart of Jesus Christ as He hung upon the Cross? So now, as you read these words, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced," adore the Infinite Wisdom of God who was able to fulfill the prophecy made hundreds of years before in the most singular and literal manner!

Our text is a prophecy of the conversion of the Jews. They practically pierced the Savior when they clamored for His Crucifixion although Pilate tried to make a way for His escape—and the whole Jewish race has continued to endorse their dreadful deed. Most of the Jews who are now living still reject Christ with the utmost scorn and contempt. The very mention of His name often produces a manifestation of the greatest fury. They call Him, "the Nazarene." I would not like to mention the various opprobrious epithets by which our Lord is called by the Jews. I marvel not that they speak of Him as they do, for, as they reckon Him to be an impostor, it is but natural that they should heap scorn upon Him. But in doing so they show that they accept the act and deed of their forefathers—and so His blood is upon them and upon their children according to the terrible imprecation uttered to Pilate. But the day is coming when all this will be changed. Israel, still beloved of the Lord, the first-born of all the nations, shall yet recognize Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, as being the true Messiah—and then there will come over Israel such a sorrow for having rejected the Messiah as no nation ever knew before! They will look back on all the hundreds or thousands of years during which they have been a people scattered and exiled from their own land which was the glory of all lands—and they will then realize that what Isaiah and the other Prophets wrote was plain and clear and that they ought to have seen it before.

Judicial blindness has happened unto them even until the present day but they will then see and there will never be any other Christians in the world such as they will make, so devout and earnest and so anxious to do the will of God in all things. Then will the Gentiles also be gathered in when Israel shall at last receive her king. The first Christian missionaries were of the seed of Abraham and so shall the last and most successful ones be! God will graft in again the natural branches of the good olive tree together with us who were, by nature, only wild olive trees, but who have, by Grace, been grafted into the good olive tree! O glorious day when that comes to pass! May God send it soon and may some of us, if not all, live to see it! Yet remember that though it will be a day of great joy to the repentant Jews, it will also be to them a day of deep sorrow as they recall their long rejection of their dear Lord and Savior.

I want to remind you that the way in which the Jews will come to Christ is just the way in which you and I also must come to Him if we ever come to Him at all. They are to come mourning for Him and sorrowing especially because they crucified Him. But you and I also crucified Him as much as the Jews did—at least in a certain sense of which I am going to speak to you and, consequently, when we come to Christ, we must come in just the same way that the Jews are to come to Him. In fact, there is no difference in this matter between the Jews and the Gentiles. There is similar sin in each case and the same Savior—and when we come to Christ, it must be with the same kind of mourning and the same kind of faith with which Israel shall come in the days when God, in His mercy, shall gather her to Himself.

I. My subject is to be Evangelical sorrow—godly sorrow for sin—and my first remark concerning it is that WHEREVER IT EXISTS, IT IS ALWAYS A CREATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications:..and they shall mourn." There was never any

real godly sorrow which worked repentance acceptable to God except that which was the result of the Holy Spirit's own work within the soul.

True evangelical repentance is not produced by mere conscience. However much the conscience may be awakened and instructed, the Spirit of God must operate upon the heart—otherwise the natural conscience cannot rise to the heights of true repentance.

It is not the product of mere terror I believe that men can be driven into a sort of repentance by preaching to them the wrath of God, or by a sense of that wrath overtaking them in times of sickness or of the approach of death. But terror alone is hardening, rather than softening in its influence! It produces a repentance that needs to be repented of—it cannot produce evangelical sorrow for sin.

And, certainly, true repentance can never be produced in the soul by any outward machinery. Attempts have been made to produce it by covering the so-called "altar" with drapery of a certain color—violet, is, I think, the proper color to represent repentance—and by darkening the "church," as it is called—by tolling a bell at a certain time during the service, by a sort of spiritual charade, acting the tragedy of the Cross with mimic blasphemy, or, rather, with real blasphemy and a shameful mimicry of the Crucifixion of our Lord. Surely, no true repentance will ever be worked in that way! People may be made to weep and to feel by such travesties, but no spiritual result comes of it any more than of the weeping which may be produced at the theater by some pathetic scene that is acted there. No, no—the preaching of the Gospel is the ordained means of getting at men's hearts—and only the Holy Spirit's power can lead men to repent of their sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation!

Therefore it follows that genuine mourning for sin comes as a gift of Divine Grace: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace." Grace comes into the heart and enlightens the understanding so that a man understands what his criminality is in the sight of God. Then the Grace of God operates upon the conscience so that the man sees the evil and the bitterness of the sin which he has committed against the thrice-holy Jehovah. Then the same Grace affects the heart so that the man beholds the Infinite graciousness and eternal love of Christ and then begins to loathe himself to think that he should ever have treated Christ so ill. So, by a work of Grace upon the soul—and not by any other process—does the Spirit of God make men weep for sin so that they hate it and turn away from it.

This work of Grace is always attended by prayer. Notice the promise in the text—"I will pour...the Spirit of Grace and of supplications." Despairing repentance dares not pray, so that is not the kind of repentance that God accepts. Remorse for sin has often been worked in men's minds and it has driven them to despair—and that despair has prevented them from praying. But the godly repentance which the Holy Spirit gives always sets the sinner praying. Judas Iscariot repented, after a fashion, but he could not pray, so he went out and hanged himself. God save all of you from a prayer-less, tearless repentance! But if you repent of sin and at the same time really pray, then I believe we have the right to say that God has poured upon you the Spirit of Grace and of supplications—and that your mourning for sin will prove to be a godly sorrow that will work in you every blessed thing. God grant to you more and more of this Grace as long as you live!

This leads me to make a further remark which is that true repentance is continuous in a Christian. When a man mourns for sin as he ought to do, he does not leave off mourning as long as he is in this world. I am sure of this because we are told that it is "the spirit of Grace and of supplications" that God pours upon His people. Now, Grace lives in the Christian all his life and supplication also abides in the Christian all his life—so that we may infer that the third gift of the Spirit, namely, mourning for sin, will also abide in the Christian as long as he lives. I have frequently quoted to you the saying of good old Rowland Hill, that the only thing he regretted about going to Heaven was that he supposed he should have to say, "Goodbye," to repentance when he entered the pearly gates. "But," he said, "she has been my sweet companion, together with faith, all my pilgrim journey and I expect to have these two Graces with me as long as I am in this world." Oh, yes, Beloved, we are not finished with repenting and we never shall be as long as we are

here! The more we rejoice in God, the more we repent to think that we should ever have sinned and that we still sin against Him. The more we see of the loveliness of Christ, the more we repent that we ever were once blind to it! The more we taste of His amazing love, the more we smite upon our breasts and grieve to think that we should ever have refused Him and should

have felt no love in our hearts in return for His great love to us. If you are through repenting, Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Spirit has finished working in you, for as long as He works, Grace, supplications and repenting all go together!

II. Now, having shown you that wherever there is true evangelical mourning for sin, it is the work of the Spirit of God, I pass on to remark, in the second place, that wherever there is this acceptable mourning for sin, IT IS CAUSED BY LOOKING TO CHRIST.

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." What is the inference from that fact? Why, that repentance is not a preparation for looking to Christ! Do you not see that? The looking is put first and the mourning afterwards. Yet I know what many of you have thought. You have said to yourselves, "We must mourn for sin and then look to Christ to pardon it." That is not God's order and we must always be careful to keep all the Truths of God in the order in which He has put them. Remember, Sinner, that there will never be a tear of acceptable repentance in your eyes till you have first looked to Jesus Christ! "Oh, but," someone says, "I have had many terrors and horrors concerning sin, yet I have never looked to Christ." Then, all those terrors and horrors are unacceptable! They may be the work of conscience, or, perhaps, partly even the work of the devil, himself—but evangelical repentance begins with a believing look at Christ! You must first fix your eyes upon Christ before you can truly repent! And I tell you that all your repenting apart from believing in Jesus are of no value, of no use—therefore, away with them! If you weep for sin without fixing your gaze upon Christ, you will have to weep again over your repentance, for it is, itself, another sin! Look away from everything else to Jesus, for He can melt that hard heart of yours and enable you to repent. Do not, as our proverbs say, put the cart before the horse, or put the fruit into the ground instead of the root—but begin with looking unto Jesus and then true repentance will surely follow!

But what is there in looking to Christ to make a man hate sin and repent of it? I answer—Looking to Him we see how sin hates purity. There was an eloquent, flowery preacher who, as he delivered his discourse one Sunday morning, exclaimed, "O Virtue, fair and beauteous maid, if you should once descend from Heaven to earth, and stand among the sons of men, they would be all charmed by your beauties and would fall down and worship you!" It so happened that there was a certain plain, blunt preacher who was not at all an eloquent orator who had to preach in the afternoon in the same building. And having heard the morning discourse, he ventured to repeat the apostrophe to Virtue which I quoted just now and when he had finished the quotation, he said, "But, O Virtue, you did descend from Heaven to earth in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—and did all men worship You? No, they vilified You, they abhorred You, they said, 'let Him be crucified,' and they took You and nailed You to the accursed tree and put You to a shameful death!" The death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross was an impeachment of the whole world! It showed how bitterly fallen man hates perfection—and if Christ were to come again to the earth as He came before, men would again crucify Him! And if Christ's disciples were more like their Lord, I doubt not that they would be far more persecuted than they now are—even as they were in the ages that are past!

Further, when we look on Jesus Christ upon the Cross, we see sin's ingratitude to love. Christ was not merely pure and perfect, but He came to earth upon no errand but that of love and mercy. There were no thunderbolts in His hands with which to smite the guilty, but even His enemies said, "This Man receives

sinner, and eats with them." He Himself said, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Love and pity to men were in His bosom, yet see how the world treated Him! It would not have pure Benevolence in its midst! He was the Friend of men, the greatest philanthropist who ever lived, loving the most degraded and seeking to lift them up—yet they took Him and nailed Him to the Cross of wood. O Sin, what an accursed thing you are, that you did not only hate Purity, itself, but also perfect Purity combined with Infinite Love and that you did shoot your sharpest arrows into the heart of the best Friend that man has ever had!

Yet even that is not all that a sight of Christ upon the Cross shows to us, for it also shows us man's abhorrence of God, for, after all, that which excited the bitterest enmity of the world was the Godhead of Christ—His Divine attributes! Jesus Christ was God and He came to this earth—and wicked men, though they could not kill God, went as near to it as they could by killing Christ who was God as well as Man! We use the word, "regicide," when we speak of a man who kills a king and we rightly use the word, "Decide," in speaking of the crime of which the world made itself guilty when it put Christ to death! It was the ever-blessed Son of God whom wicked men nailed to the tree. And the wicked world would commit the same crime again if it could! If all men were gathered together, taking the human race as

it now is, and it were put to the vote, "Shall there be any God?" every fool would hold up his hand for, "No God." "The fool has said in his heart, "No God." And as the mass of mankind belong to that category in spiritual things, they say,

"No God!"

It is quite possible that I am addressing some people who would be delighted if it could be said to them, "Now, if you hold up your hand, there will be no more religion to bother you, no Judgment Day for you to dread, no Resurrection, no Hell, no Heaven—in fact, God Himself will be put away—as far as you are concerned there will be no God." What good news it would be to you if it were really so, for the thing which troubles you now is that there is a God. Well, that only shows that you, also, are among those who are guilty of the death of Christ, for, if you could do it, you would extinguish God Himself! And this is what they did, as far as they could, when they nailed the Son of God to the Cross of Calvary.

But, dear Friends, when we rightly look to Christ, we see that our guilt was so great that only an Infinite Sacrifice could atone for it. Our sin comes home to us. At least mine comes home to me. I look upon the Cross and my self-righteousness says, "I did not crucify Him." But my conscience replies, "No, but you heard, for many years, about Christ being put to death without being at all affected by that fact. And, therefore, you virtually sanctioned the dreadful death by not condemning it! And you were not moved to any feeling of shame even though Jesus died in your place." That is all true, my Lord. For many a day I thought nothing of You. Then my conscience added, "You know that when Christ came to you, in the preaching of the Gospel, for a long while you refused Him. Many a time your conscience was awakened and you were urged to accept Christ as your Savior! But you said, 'I will not have this Man to reign over me.'" Yes, Lord, that also is true. I, who now love You with all my heart, once refused You—no, not merely once, but a thousand times I refused You and so I did what the Jews of old did—rejected You! Ah, Beloved, we chose the pleasures of the world instead of the love of Christ so that we were as bad as they were who said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" We chose the poor, paltry, trivial joys of time and sense—and let the Savior go! Must not all of you confess that you were guilty in this respect?

Possibly I am addressing some who in the days of their ignorance even cursed the name of Jesus and persecuted or ridiculed His people. You have a loving sister of whom you used to make what you called, "rare fun," because of her love to Christ—and you knew that you were wounding Christ, Himself, through one of His followers. Perhaps there was someone whom you used to persecute very violently for being a lover of the Lord. If you did, you were persecuting Jesus, even as Saul of Tarsus did. Do not say that you never spit in His dear face! Do not say that you never scourged His blessed shoulders! You have done so as far as you could do it—in spirit you have done it, though not in very deed. Look to Him now! Look to Him now and, as you see Him on the Cross and see what wicked men did to Him there, say, "They were only doing it in my place—doing what I would have done if I had been there—doing what I have, in effect, done for a great part of my life."

Even we who have believed in Jesus must accuse ourselves of guilt concerning our treatment of our dear Lord as we look into His face. He has forgiven us, blessed be His dear name! He has not a word to say against us. There is nothing but love in His heart toward us, but we cannot forgive ourselves for all the wrong we have done to Him. Oftentimes we have plaited a crown of thorns and put it on His head as the soldiers did. That silly talk when we ought to have been proclaiming His Gospel—those doubts and fears, that wicked unbelief when we ought to have been fully trusting Him—that love of the world, that greed of gain when we ought to have been honoring Him with our substance—all this was the plaiting of thorny crowns to put upon His blessed brow! Ah, yes, we may well look at Him and mourn! Who among us can look at Him and not mourn? God forgive us if we can!

III. My time is almost spent, but I was going to show you, in the third place, that EVANGELICAL SORROW FOR SIN IS THE CHIEF OF SORROWS. Whenever it comes into the heart, it is not a sham sorrow, but a very real one. Our text says, "They shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

The grief of one who has lost his only child is very acute. There is hardly a more painful errand on which a minister of the Gospel, or any other Christian has to go, than to visit a family in which the only child lies dead. There is real sorrow there for they are thinking that their name will not be continued and their dear child was one in whom they took great delight. An only child is usually very much loved, so, for that child to die causes special sorrow. And it is a great grief for a man to lose his first-born—the beginning of his strength in whom he had taken such pride. Well now, such is

the kind of grief that a true Christian feels concerning his sin. May we have it more and more, O Lord! It were better that I lost every child—better that I lost life, itself—than that I should sin against You! That is a cruel crime which may well make me mourn.

The Prophet then goes on to compare the mourning for sin to the mourning of the whole nation when Josiah died and the land rang with bitter lamentations for the loved monarch who had been slain in battle. The weeping men and wailing women went through every street and Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, was the chief mourner among them all. Now, such is the sorrow of a soul when it realizes that it crucified Christ. It is a sweet and blessed sorrow, but still, it is a very deep and real one. I ask that I may be made to feel more and more of it—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,

And after none but Thee!

And then I would—oh, that I might!—

A constant weeper be."

IV. I must not dwell upon this sacred topic, but close with what would have been my fourth division if there had been time for it. That is that EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE DOES NOT ITSELF CLEANSE US FROM SIN.

Are you startled by that statement? Then, read the 1st verse of the 13th Chapter—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Now, dear Friends, if mourning for sin took the sin away, there would not be any need of the cleansing fountain! But, although the mourning was so real and so bitter, it did not take away the mourner's sin. Toplady was right when he sang—

"Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone— You must save, and You alone."

But while evangelical repentance does not take away sin, wherever it is present it is a proof that sin is taken away. If you have repented of your sin and have believed in Jesus, then you have been cleansed in the open fountain—and that same blood which has cleansed you from guilt will yet prove that it can also cleanse you from the power of sin. Am I addressing any who are now mourning on account of sin? "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." That blessedness awaits you, for, "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Go and confess your transgression unto the Lord—say to Him with David, "Against You, You only, have I sinned." Go and stand at the foot of the Cross and view the flowing of your Savior's precious blood—and while you stand there and mourn for Him, the Holy Spirit will be pleased to bear witness with your spirit and you shall have the blessed assurance which will enable you to know that the blood of Jesus has washed all your sin away—and you shall go on your way rejoicing—hating the sin that made Him suffer and praising the Grace that has forgiven it!

Before I close I would that some poor sinner, instead of trying to mourn for sin, would first look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for that is the way to be made to mourn for sin! Instead of thinking that repentance can cleanse you, look to the finished work of Jesus and believe in Him, for that is the only way by which pardon can come to you. May God bless us all and keep us always repenting and always believing, and He shall have the praise and the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ZECHARIAH 12; 13:1.

Zechariah 12:1. The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel Thus says the LORD, which stretches forth the Heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him. Note how this chapter begins— "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel"—not against Israel. The Gospel is always, to the true preacher of it, the burden of the Lord, but, to those who receive it, it is a burden of blessing, a load of mercy. To those who reject it, it will become a burdensome stone, crushing them to their eternal ruin. God grant, in His Infinite Mercy, that none of us may belong to the last class!

2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. This is a promise of God's abounding mercy to His chosen people Israel. When

He comes to their aid, they shall be a cup of trembling to their enemies. Those enemies will try to swallow them, but they will find that they are drinking a cup of poison which will cause their own death. Oh that the day might soon come when God would remember His ancient people, the Jews, and bring them back to their own land as He certainly will do in the fullness of time! And when He has done it, then it shall come to pass that all who fight against them shall find His people to be as a cup of trembling to them. This promise which is to be literally fulfilled to God's chosen people, the seed of Abraham, is also spiritually true to all Believers. Christian, your enemies cannot really hurt you! If they could drink you up as men drink a cup of wine, you would be a cup of trembling to them—they would find that they had taken in more than they wanted! All the persecutors of the Church of God, in smiting this Stone, have themselves been broken on it. They have found that they have undertaken a task which has ended in their own destruction. Woe unto the man who fights against the Church of the living God! Victory must always come to the Lord's people, for greater is He who is with them than all that can be against them!

3. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it This is literally true, but it is also spiritually true. As the Church of God is to be a cup of trembling to its enemies, so is it also to be a burdensome stone. They do not like it, they cannot bear it. They would, if they could, get rid of the spiritual Church of God, but they cannot get rid of it. There it is—a Stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, which will grow until it fills the whole earth and breaks in pieces everything that opposes it! Those who set themselves against God and against His Christ, shall find themselves crushed to atoms by this mighty Stone.

4. In that day, says the LORD, I will smite every horse with confusion and his rider with madness. The chief strength of Jerusalem's enemies lay in horses and chariots, but God bids His people not to fear them, for He knows how to overcome all power, whether it is the power of cavalry or the power of infantry. He knows how to smite every horse with confusion and every rider with madness, for, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth even forever." And He can protect them against the most powerful foes that may assail them.

4. And I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah. It looked as if the Lord had been asleep, but now He says, "'I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah'—I will look at them and note their sufferings, pity their griefs, plan for their good and come forth for their defense."

4. And will smite every horse of the people with blindness. Their enemies shall not be able to see them, but God will see them and He will deliver His people and overthrow all their adversaries.

5, 6. And the governors of Judah shall say in their hearts, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of Hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf and they shall devour all the people round about on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The literal prophecy is that the seed of Israel shall go back to their own land and shall prevail over their adversaries—but the spiritual meaning is that the Church of God shall have great power among the people of the earth. They shall have fire put into them—the fire of the Holy Spirit—and they shall be like a lighted firebrand among the wood, or as a flaming torch in a sheaf of corn—and you know how soon the sheaf would be burnt up. If God has put within you fire from Heaven, you will be sure to burn and those with whom you live will soon feel the flame. Place one really gracious man in any district and if he is thoroughly on fire with the Holy Spirit, it will be like throwing a blazing firebrand into a field of dry corn! What a

conflagration will there be! The Lord send us many such blessed burnings!

7. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. God will begin by saving the most defenseless. The tents of the people were easily swept away by their powerful foes. "Therefore," says the Prophet, "the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first." As for the people in the strongly defended city of Jerusalem, He would protect them, but He would do it in such a way that they would not take the glory to themselves. God is always very jealous of His own honor. He will save us, but it will be in a way that shall prevent our pride from glorying in it. He will never allow one saved soul to be able to say, "I saved myself," or, "I contributed to the merit which has brought me to Heaven." No—God must have all the glory—every jot and tittle of it! And all His people are glad that He should have it.

8. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the LORD before them. What a blessed thing it is when the Lord strengthens all His people so that the weakest among them are as strong as that ruddy-faced youth who smote Goliath—and the strongest of them are like the swift-winged angels of God, ready to do His bidding! Oh, that this Church might be in that blessed state! You remember how it is written that when Israel came up out of Egypt, "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." When will the whole Church of Christ get to be in that condition? O you feeble ones, lay hold upon the promise now before us and do not rest till it is fulfilled in you! "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them."

9-11. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. No doubt these verses refer, primarily, to the great mourning when King Josiah fell in battle when all the people wept and mourned for many days because their king had been slain by the archers' arrows. But this is also typical of the lamentation of a heart when it is broken on account of the death of Christ. Sorrow for sin is to be after the fashion of that great national mourning of which Jeremiah sang so plaintively in the Book of Lamentations.

12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. For this was to be a personal sorrow in which both husbands and wives must weep on their own account.

12. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. Perhaps these names are mentioned to indicate different classes and orders of persons—the family of the house of David the king shall mourn and the family of the house of Nathan the Prophet shall mourn. Both David and Nathan had long since gone, but their descendants were still called by their names.

13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The priests, as well as the kings and the Prophets, were to be represented in this universal mourning.

13. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. Shimei, or Simeon, as the Septuagint gives it—which may either represent the scribes, or else may refer to the people in general. These shall all mourn,

personally and separately, for Him whom they have pierced.

14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. Why these chapters were divided here, I cannot imagine, for it is clear that the passage should run right on.

Zechariah 13:1. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

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