

Rain and Grace—a Parallel

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that just as God sovereignly controls the rain to nourish the earth, so He alone sovereignly dispenses His grace to refresh and sustain the soul.

Scripture: Job 38:25-27, Isaiah 53:5, James 1:17, Romans 5:8

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Grace", "Prayer"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon draws a powerful parallel between the natural phenomenon of rain and the spiritual reality of God's grace. He emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty in dispensing grace, the wisdom in its measured distribution, and the vital necessity of prayer for receiving spiritual blessings. Using the example of Job and vivid natural imagery, Spurgeon encourages believers to recognize their dependence on God and to seek His grace earnestly through prayer.

Transcript

"Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?" Job 38:25-27.

JOB was an admirable man, but the Lord meant to make him still better. The best of men are but men at the best and though Job was, in a certain sense, perfect, yet he was not perfectly perfect—there was a further stage beyond that which he had reached, otherwise he would not have been tried as he was. But because the Lord knew that there was something better for Job than he had already attained, he had to be subjected to extraordinary trial. He was such a valuable diamond that there had to be more cutting for him than for a common stone. He was made of such good metal that he paid for being put into the furnace—there would come out something still more pleasing to the great Refiner if He cast that which was so precious into the most fervent heat. Hence it was that Job was so greatly tried. Yet, after all his trials, it seemed as if he would miss their blessed result, for his three friends—the miserable comforters—appeared to be the meddlers in the whole design. By their cruel, cutting, sarcastic observations, they irritated Job so that it looked as if he would be harder instead of softer because of the fires.

Sometimes, when a man knows that he is being unjustly and unfairly treated, he stiffens his back, hardens himself and influences which, by themselves, might have worked great tenderness of spirit, are spoiled because something else is thrown in. Job was in this condition and he, therefore, seemed to rise in his

own estimation rather than to sink, as was desired, until, at last, the Lord ended the dispute by manifesting Himself. Out of the whirlwind He spoke to Job and bade him gird up his loins and meet his Maker if he dared. Then it was that Job was brought to his right position and, at the end, he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Then Job realized the benefit of his affliction—but not till then. When the Lord revealed to Job His supremacy, His eternal Glory, and in that light compelled him to see his own imperfection and nothingness—then the Patriarch's trials became sanctified to him.

Our text is a part of God's challenge to Job. The Lord seemed to say, "If Job is, indeed, half as great as he thinks he is, let him see whether he can do what his Creator does." He is challenged about so slight a matter, apparently, as the sending of the rain. Does Job know how it is done? Can he explain all the phenomena? Our modern scientists tell us how rain is produced and I suppose their explanation is the correct one, but they cannot tell us how it is that power is given to carry out what they call, "the laws of Nature." Neither can they make the rain, themselves, nor, if a drought were to continue till the nation was on the verge of famine, would they be able to cover the skies with blackness, or even to water a single acre of land! No, with all our explanations, it is still a great mystery—and it remains a secret with God how it is that He waters the earth with rain.

I am not going into that matter at this time. I intend to use the rain as an emblem of the Grace of God, as it usually is in Scripture—a figure of that blessed overflowing of the river of God's Love which comes down to quench our thirst of sin, to refresh us, to enliven us, to feed us, to soften us and to cleanse us. This matchless water of life has all sorts of uses and God sends it, when He pleases, in abundant showers upon His own people according to that ancient Word of God, "You, O God, did send a plentiful rain whereby You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary." The Hebrew means, "You did pour out blessings," as from a cornucopia, and so, "You did confirm Your inheritance, when it was weary." There are many here who are weary—they need to be refreshed and they are praying to God to send a gracious shower, a copious distilling of His matchless Grace upon their hearts and lives. I am going to preach upon this passage with the desire that while I am speaking, such a blessing may come upon us, or that, at any rate, we may begin to pray for it.

I. My first point is that, AS GOD ALONE GIVES RAIN, SO GOD ALONE GIVES GRACE.

Jehovah asks of Job the question, "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on the earth?" It is God, and God only, who creates rain. We cannot make it, but He can and He does give it. And it is absolutely so with His Grace—The Lord must give it, or there will be none. If it had not been for His eternal plan whereby He purposed to give Grace to the guilty, the whole race of mankind would have been left, like the fallen angels, without hope and without mercy! The angels that kept not their first estate, but rebelled against God, were given over to punishment without any intimation whatever of redemption for them—or of any possibility of their restoration. God, who does as He wills with His Grace which is most sovereign and free, passed over the fallen angels and made His Grace to light on insignificant and guilty men. And it has been after the same fashion in all history—if God has withheld the blessings of His Grace from any of the nations, they have not been able to procure them for themselves.

One lone light burned in Israel for hundreds of years while the rest of the inhabitants of the earth were left in darkness. And the world, with all its wisdom, could not and did not find God. Men, in their ignorance, set up idols almost as numerous as their worshippers—and in their blindness they went this way and that way,

but always away from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights"—as certainly as the rain comes down from Heaven! There is but one source of supply for Grace and that source is God Himself. He gives Grace and, "He gives more Grace." otherwise there would be none whatever among the sons of men!

And, moreover, it is God who finds the way by which His Grace can come to men. I will not enter into any elaborate explanations of my text. It indicates that God finds a way by which the rain comes down from the upper regions to water the thirsty fields. "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water?" Only God Himself has made a channel for the rain—we could not have made it. So is it with His Grace, otherwise how could Grace have come to man? How was it possible for the thrice-holy God to deal leniently with sinners who had provoked Him to anger? How could it be that the Judge of all the earth, who must be just, should, nevertheless, pass by transgression, iniquity and sin? This is a problem which would have perplexed a Sanhedrim of seraphim! If all the mightiest intelligences that God has ever made had sat together in solemn conclave for a thousand years, they would not have been able to solve this problem—How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? Infinite Wisdom devised that matchless way of substitution by which, through the death of the Son of God, men might be saved! There is the stamp of Divinity about that verse, "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

It is God who gives Grace and God who, in a Divinely gracious way, has given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to be the channel through which Grace can come down to guilty men! Blessed be God for this and let His name be adored forever! Having thus resolved upon giving Grace to men and having made a channel in which His Grace might flow to men, let it never be forgotten that God now directs the pathway of all the Grace that comes into the world. Our parallel, in the natural world, is that, according to the original of our text, there is a sort of canal, or path, made for every drop of water as it descends from the heavens to the earth. There is not the most minute particle of rain that is left to fall according to its own fancy or will—each single drop of water that is blown aslant by the March wind, is as surely steered by God as are yonder glorious stars revolving in their orbits! There is a purpose of God concerning every solitary flake of snow and every single portion of hail that comes down from Heaven—all these are ordered according to His eternal counsel and will. God alone can arrange all this.

It always seems to me to be a very wonderful way in which the world is watered. If all the rain were to pour upon us at once in a deluge, we should all be drowned—but it comes down gently, drop by drop, and thus it effects God's purpose much more surely than if it burst in one tremendous waterspout destroying everything. God, by the mysterious laws by which He governs inanimate matter, has so planned it that the rain shall come in drops exactly the right size, such drops as shall hang upon a tiny blade of grass and scarcely shall bend it. See how the bright drops, like so many diamonds, hang in myriads on the hedgerows just the right size to hang there—neither too large nor too little. So is it with the Grace of God—it is given sovereignly and wisely.

I daresay some Christian people think that they would like to have, in their first five minutes after believing in Christ, all the Grace they will ever have—but it cannot be. I have often admired that expression of the Apostle Paul, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." God teaches us His will, but He does not teach us too much at a time. Have you ever seen children who have been in school, so hardly driven by their masters that they have been mentally crippled and have never made the advance they ought to have made because they were driven too hard at the first? I have met with this sort

of thing, spiritually. In several cases I have known, men and women have learned so much of the things of God in a short time that their reason has been most seriously jeopardized. I often have to look at young converts and almost to pray that they might not learn too much at once, for the deep things of God are so amazing to a man who is just plucked out of the world that if the cases of insanity through religion were much more frequent than they are, I should not at all be astonished! I wonder how any of us can bear what God has taught us already. If you could give eyesight to a man born blind and then, in a moment, were to place him in the full blaze of the sun, it would be a serious danger to him. If he has been long in the darkness, he must see the light by degrees. In like manner, we ought to thank God that He does not deluge us all at once with all the Grace we shall ever have, but He gives it to us gently, as soft vernal showers which, in Infinite Wisdom, distil upon the thirsty earth.

So we have seen that God gives Grace and God finds a way of giving Grace. And then God directs the way of His Grace and the measure and the manner of it. And He does it all in wisdom and prudence.

See, then, my dear Friends—I hope you all do—our absolute dependence upon God for all spiritual blessings. A farmer may do all he likes with his ground, but he will never have a harvest if God withholds the rain. He may be the most skillful agriculturist who ever lived, but he can do nothing if the heavens above him are as brass. If he were to call in the most learned astronomer of the day, there is not one who, with his wand, could move the stars, or cause the clouds to open and pour down rain upon the earth. If there were sore trouble in the land because farming was failing for lack of rain, if both Houses of Parliament were to be called together and the Queen were to sit upon her throne of state—and they were unanimously to pass an act ordering the rain to fall—He that sits in the heavens would laugh! The Lord would have them in derision, for the key of the rain is in no hand but that of Jehovah. It is exactly so with the Grace of God. You and I cannot command it. The presence of the most holy men in our midst would not, of itself, bring it. The most earnest preaching, the most Scriptural doctrine, the most faithful obedience to ordinances would not make it necessary that we should receive Grace. God must give it—He is an absolute Sovereign and we are entirely dependent upon Him.

To what does this fact drive us? It drives us to prayer. When we have done all that we can—and surely we can scarcely pray if we have neglected anything that we can do—when we have done all that lies within our power as earnest-hearted Christian workers, then we must come to the Lord, Himself, for strength, and unto the God of our salvation for all power. This has been said so many times that when I say it, again, someone may reply, "That is a mere platitude." Just so—and the mischief is that the Church is beginning to think it is only a platitude—but if we all felt that the most important thing for the Church of Christ to do, after she has borne her testimony to the world, is to pray, what a different state of things there would soon be! But now you know what they are doing in far too many places—they push the Prayer Meeting up into a corner and if there is anything to be put off, they give up the Prayer Meeting! In some of our places of worship, we might search a long time for the Prayer Meeting. It is somewhere in the back settlements, down in some small room which is too big for it even then! People plead that they cannot get out to the Prayer Meeting—they will go out to a lecture or to spend the evening for pleasure—but they do not care to go out when it is "only a Prayer Meeting."

Just so and as long as that is the estimation in which professing Christians hold it, so long must we cease to expect showers of blessing from on high! The main thing is for the Church to pray! She knows that she is dependent upon her God—let her show it by crying day and night to Him that He would send a blessing. There is a big mill with all its spindles and all its workers. I think I see it as we speed along in the train through one of our Northern counties. It is all lit up, tonight, and many busy hands are at work. But where

is the power that makes those spindles move? In that little shed outside, where there is a man with black hands, stirring the fire, and keeping up the pressure of steam. That is where the power is! And that is a picture of the Prayer Meeting. It is the source of the Church's energy and if public prayer is neglected, or if private prayer is slackened, or if family prayer is held back in any degree, we lose the power which brings the blessing—this will be acknowledged when we come to truly know that all the power is of God and that as we cannot command a drop of rain, but must leave it in the hands of God, so we cannot command an ounce of Grace—if Grace is to be so measured—it must come from God, and from God alone.

II. Now, secondly, dear Friends, notice in my text that, AS GOD GIVES RAIN, SO RAIN FALLS IRRESPECTIVE OF MEN. "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt; to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man?"

I daresay you have often thought it strange that it should rain out at sea where it cannot water a single furrow, or apparently benefit any human being. Is it not still more strange that the water should fall so abundantly on vast tracts of sand and on plains that as yet have never been trod by the foot of man, and on those lofty peaks, those virgin hills where a human being has never yet been found? Men have a notion that nothing is good for anything if it is not good for them, but they are very foolish for thinking so. If what God does in Providence is good for nothing but for a rat, it is not unwise for Him to do it! He has other creatures to think of beside men and He thinks of them. The little fish in the sea and the birds of the air—and even the worms in the earth are remembered by the Most High and, sometimes, that weather which we say is so bad is only bad because it is bad for us—rebels against God. It may have been given especially for the birds and, perhaps, sometimes, God thinks that it is better to have weather that is good for birds than good for men, for He has to provide for us all and they, at least, have not sinned. And if He thinks of them, there is as much of mercy in the thought as when He thinks of us rebellious creatures. He makes it "to rain on the earth, where there is no one."

Now the parallel in Grace is this—that God's Grace will come without any human observation. If the Grace of God comes to some of us, thousands will see it, for they will mark the working of His Grace in our life and conversation. But there sits a dear friend, over yonder, so obscure that possibly only two or three will ever know anything that she does. Perhaps, my Brother, only half-a-dozen are affected by your influence. Do you not rejoice that God, who makes the rain to fall where there is no one, will make His Grace to come to you, though nobody, or, at most, only two or three, may see it? I have delighted sometimes to wander into the middle of a forest and get far away from all sound of the voices of fallen men—and then to spy out some little flower growing right among the big trees. The sun gets at it, somehow, for a few hours in the day, and in its golden beams that little flower rejoices. And as I have looked at it and seen its beauty, I have remembered the words of the poet—

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen," but I have not at all agreed with him when he added—

"And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

It is God's flower! God made it grow that He might look at it, Himself, and, therefore, its sweetness was not wasted, for God was there to appreciate and accept it! The most beautiful places in the world are, doubtless, places where men have never been. The most lovely gardens are those that God, Himself, keeps, where no Adam has been placed to till the soil. His trees, untouched by the axe, and unpruned by the knife, grow gloriously—"The trees of the Lord are full of sap. The cedars of Lebanon which He has

planted." My heart has rejoiced as I have thought of God walking among the great trees of the far-off West—those mighty monarchs of the forest that seem to touch the stars—walking among them when nobody was there but Himself, looking at the works of His own hands and admiring what He had made. Well, now, if you happen to be a solitary person, quite alone, one who will never make a noise in the world for all that God does for you, never mind about that—He causes it to rain on the earth where there is no one—and your obscurity shall not keep back the blessing!

So, you see, rain comes without human observation. And it also comes without human co-operation, for it often rains "where there is no one." Therefore, no man helps God to send the rain. As to Grace, it, also, often comes where there is no man to bring it. When a person has not heard a sermon, when he has been on the sea, far away from all means of Grace, yet God has caused it to rain upon him. There is here, tonight, I think, a Brother who left this country unimpressed by the Gospel, who, nevertheless, when near the shores of Australia, sat down and read a sermon which his wife had put into his box—and God met with him there! The Lord has many ways of proving that His Grace descends upon men without any help from them—and that He can send it where He pleases by ways of His own. If the ordinary means should seem to fail, He can cause it to rain "where there is no one."

Perhaps there is somebody here who is going right away from the usual means of Grace. Possibly, dear Friend, you are fretting to yourself as you think, "I shall never come to this place of worship again. Perhaps I may never hear the Gospel to my soul's comfort again." Suppose you are right away in the bush of Australia? God can send His Grace to you, there, just as easily as He can send it here! If you are going to the backwoods of America or Canada, do not be afraid—the Lord is at home there. If you have to settle down in a log hut and are miles from any meeting of Christian people—do not be dispirited or cast down, but, in your loneliness, sit and sing and let this be a part of your song, "He makes a way for the overflowing water, to cause it to rain on the earth, where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man." Therefore be encouraged by this second thought.

III. I had many other things to say to you upon this point, but time fails, so I must notice, thirdly, that BOTH RAIN AND GRACE FALL WHERE WE MIGHT LEAST HAVE EXPECTED THEM. "To satisfy the desolate and waste ground."

Grace comes where there was no Grace before. Where all was desert and waste, there comes the rain. And where all was graceless and godless, there comes the Grace of God. Grace comes where there is the greatest need of it. Here was a dreadful place—it was waste—it was a wilderness yet the rain came there. And where there are men who feel themselves to be just as dead and barren as a desert, Grace will come even there! The rain comes to wildernesses and Grace can come to you, poor guilty Sinners! If you have nothing with which to entertain the Grace, Grace will bring its own company with it. It will come into your empty heart and make you one of the "people prepared for the Lord." Grace waits not for men, neither tarries for the sins of men. We call it Prevenient Grace because it comes before it is sought—and God bestows it on a people who are utterly undeserving of it.

Grace comes where, apparently, there is nothing to repay it for coming. When the rain falls on the wilderness, it seems as if no result could follow from its fall. What a mercy it is that when we have nothing to pay, God lavishes His mercy on us and, in due time, we repay Him in the way He expects. I do not suppose that many of you have ever seen the great steppes of Russia. I have been told that for thousands of miles they are like our London streets, without a single blade of anything green—a horrible desolation! Yet after the snow has gone and springtime comes in and summer, with its wonderful heat, that plain is

covered with grass and with abundant flowers of the field. And the grass continues until it is cut for use—and then the land returns to that same barren appearance which it wore before. It is amazing, is it not, that showers of rain and the warmth of the sun should produce vegetation where, apparently, there seemed to be none whatever?

Just so does the Grace of God come to a sinner's heart! It is all hard, dead, black, hopeless. But when the Grace comes, it brings life with it and suddenly there spring up in the man all manner of good works, holy words, gracious thoughts and everything that is sweet and pleasing in the sight of God! And what is best of all, it continues to produce a harvest that never dries up and the soil never returns to its former barrenness again! Therefore, Beloved, let us take heart concerning the Grace of God. If the rain comes where there seems to be no argument in favor of its coming, so may the Grace of God come to you who have no right to it—no expectation of it—no hope of it—no, are even filled with despair concerning it! While you are sitting here, the Lord can meet with you and save you! Be of good comfort—to you is the Gospel sent, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Trust your guilty soul with Him and you, even you, shall receive the showers of love that come from God's right hand! There is nothing in the Covenant of Grace that shall be held back from you—even though you are the very worst and vilest one in this place—if you only trust the Savior. Though you may write yourself down as most surely lost and given up to barrenness, like the heath that is near unto burning, yet it shall not be so with you—God shall bless you and that right early.

"Oh, if He does!" says one, "I will bless His name." Then that is one reason why He will do it, that you may bless His name. I have often told you of one who said, "If God saves me, He shall never hear the last of it." Well, that is the sort of people He likes to save—people who, with glad heart and voice, will proclaim and proclaim again, and proclaim to all eternity that the Lord saved them—even them! Remember the text of last Sunday night, for it is just in the same key as the text of tonight—"He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty." [See Sermon #2582, Volume 44—Alto and Bass] He has caused it

"to rain on the earth where there is no one; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground," for it is to these waste grounds, these desolate places, that God specially looks with favor. If you are great in your own esteem, He will make you little. But if you are little, He will make you great. If you live by your own power, you shall be slain. But if you are slain and dead beyond hope of recovery in yourself, you shall be made alive! You empty ones shall be filled and you filled ones shall be emptied. You that are up shall be down—and you that are down shall be lifted up, for God turns things upside down. And when He comes to work, He effects marvelous changes in the condition of the hearts of men.

IV. Now I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that RAIN, WHEN IT COMES, IS MOST VALUED BY LIFE, for we read in our text, that it comes "to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth."

You may water a dead post as long as you like, yet nothing will come of it. But the most tender, tiniest little herb that has a bud fast shut, knows when the rain comes and begins to develop its hidden power—and opens its bud to the rain and to the sun! That is why the Grace of God comes, "to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth." I hope that there is a good deal of budding life here. The Lord has looked upon you and has made you feel uneasy—that is a bud. Oh, that the uneasiness might open into full repentance! The Lord has looked upon you and He has given you desires. Oh, that the Grace of God may increase those desires till they shall open into resolution and determination! The Lord has sent the dew

from on high upon your soul, dear Friend, and you are beginning to hope that there is salvation somewhere and, perhaps, for you. Oh, that the hope may open, like a bud that has been shut up—open into faith in Jesus Christ, so that you shall say, "I will trust in Him." All the buds everywhere are just now trying to get out into the sunshine. They seem bound up in gummy envelopes, but they are beginning to open in the sunshine. I like to sit under the fir trees and hear the crack of the opening caused by the heat of the sun. You can almost see the trees rejoicing that summertime is coming! So may you see young converts open when the Grace of God is displayed abundantly—they grow before your very eyes till, sometimes, you are astonished at what the Grace of God does, with wise prudence, but yet with a sweet readiness, upon the hearts of the sons of men!

How far have your buds developed? Have you begun to pray a little? Oh, that your prayer might be more intense! I hope that little bud of private prayer will grow till it comes to family prayer so that you can pray with your wife and children. You have been reading your Bible lately, have you? Oh, thank God for that! Now I hope that bud of Bible reading will open into the daily habit of feeding upon the Word of God. Go right through the Bible if you can. Pray to God to give you a solid knowledge of its contents that you may be rooted and grounded in what His Spirit teaches you there. Some of you have another sort of bud—you have been thinking of what you can do for Christ. You thought you were converted, but you have never done much for Christ. I do not use any whips, but sometimes I am tempted to take a good long one to some of those lazy folk who do nothing and yet hope to go to Heaven. One says, "I think, my dear Pastor, that I must try to do something for Christ." Well, that is a bud—may the Grace of God be so abundant that you will leave off trying and get actually to doing!

"How am I to serve God?" said one to me the other day. I answered, "My dear Brother, get at it. 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.' Don't come and ask me, for where there is so much to be done, the man is idle who asks, 'What am I to do?' Do the first thing that comes to hand!" If a soldier in battle saw that the enemy was winning the day, he would not be hesitating and asking, "Captain, what can I do?" He would kill the first fellow that came near—and so must you, in a spiritual sense. Do something for Christ. Oh, that this Church might begin to open all its buds! May every little one become a thousand, and every small one a great multitude, to the praise of the glory of the Grace of God! O you little ones, you hidden ones, you timid ones, you trembling ones—the Grace of God is abundant! Open to receive it! See how the crocus, after having been long hidden beneath the soil, knows when the new year begins and, as soon as the sun smiles on the earth, it gently lifts up its golden cup—and is there anything more beautiful in all the world than the crocus cup when God fills that chalice with the light of Heaven? What a depth of wonderful brightness of color there is within it! All the crocus can do is to open itself—and that is all you can do—just stand and drink in God's light! Open yourself to the sweet influences of the Grace of God.

The fair lilies of the garden toil not, neither do they spin; but yet they glorify God. How they seem to stand still and just show what God can do with them! They just drink in the light and heat and then pour it all out again in silent, quiet beauty. Now you do the same! Let the purity of your life, like the purity of the lily, glorify the God who created it in you. So may His blessing rest upon you all, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: Isaiah 4:8-20.

Verse 8. But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, My friend. Let us, for the time being, forget the people to whom this message was addressed, and see whether it might not be spoken to ourselves. Come, my Friend, are you truly God's servant? Do you delight to do His will

and to walk in His ways? If so, then you are God's chosen, for, wherever there is the true spirit of obedience to the Lord, it is the result of His Grace, and Grace never comes except from the wellhead of electing love! If you are God's servant, you are God's chosen. Then see to it that you walk and live as one of the seed of Abraham, whom God calls, "My friend."

It was very touching, the other day, to notice how the Queen spoke of one who was her servant, but who had gained the friendship of his royal mistress. So the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends." May we so faithfully serve Him that it will be fitting for the Lord to speak of us in all three of these terms—"You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."

9. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof, and said unto you, You are My servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away. May the Lord now say that to each one of you who are His servants! Especially may He say the latter part of it, "I have not cast you away"! Many times He might have done so if He had dealt with us according to our deeds. "Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord," is a prayer we ought often to put up, for, in that service, we are far from perfect. I think I speak for all sane Christians—I do not undertake to speak for certain insane ones that abound at this time—but I believe that all sane servants of the Lord confess that they are such poor servants that their wonder is that they have not been dismissed from His service. Yet it is sweet to hear Him say, "I have chosen you, and not cast you away."

10. Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God. Oh, the riches of that word, "I am your God"! That is more than, "Your Friend, your Helper." "I am your God."

10. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you. First, "I will give you strength, and then I will use My own strength on your behalf: 'I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you.'"

10. Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. The poor child of God seems to cry, "Lord, You say, 'I will help you,' but I can hardly stand! I am such a babe, I have not yet learned to stand alone." "Well, then," says God, "I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Are any of you afraid that you will slip right off your feet? Are you put in very perplexing positions, so that you hardly know which way to turn? Then rest on this sweet promise, "Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

11. Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with you shall perish. The Lord Jesus Christ will put to rout all the enemies of His people! Their sins and their sorrows, their foes and their woes, shall alike be scattered to the wind!

12. You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: they that war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing. You know how it happened to Pharaoh and all his hosts—the Israelites could not find them after the Lord had overthrown them in the Red Sea. The Psalmist sang, long afterwards, concerning the Egyptians who were drowned, "There was not one of them left." So shall it be with all those whom you now fear and dread—God shall appear and work such a deliverance for you that you shall wonder where your trouble is! It shall be drowned, utterly washed away, like the Egyptians whom the children of Israel saw no more.

13. 14. For I the LORD your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not; I will help you. Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the LORD, and your Redeemer, the Holy

One of Israel You must not miss those charming words, dear Friends! Let me read them again. Some of you will want them, so do not miss them. There is some medicine here that you will need, maybe, before long—"Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

15. Behold, I will make you as a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff You know the corn drag was made rough at the bottom, as though it had sharp teeth, and when it was drawn over the wheat after it was spread out on the threshing floor, the grain was separated from the chaff. So God tells His people, if they trust Him, that He will make them into a threshing instrument having teeth—and they shall thresh not ordinary harvests—but shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff! No task is too hard for God's people to accomplish when God is with them! Difficulties vanish and their fears are driven before the wind when God strengthens them.

16. You shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and you shall rejoice in the LORD, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel Come, you that are drooping in spirit—here is God's promise to you that you shall overcome all your difficulties and then shall rejoice in God. "Oh," you say, "I could rejoice in God if He enabled me to do that!" Put the, "if," away, and believe that He is about to help you, and anticipate the victory He is going to give you by singing the song of faith!

17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst. They have come to such a state that they cannot even tell their needs— they do not know how to speak to others about their grief, or even to describe it to themselves. "Their tongue fails for thirst." What then?

17. I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. ' 'But, Lord, they could not speak! Did You not say, 'Their tongue fails'? Yet You say, 'I the Lord will hear them.'" It shows, dear Friends, that a groan is a prayer, a sigh is a prayer, and that even if we cannot get as far as to sigh or groan, our very hunger and thirst make up a prayer before God! "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

18. I will open rivers in high places. That is an unusual place to find rivers, but God does strange things when He shows mercy to the poor and needy "I will open rivers in high places."

18. And fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. There shall be enough and to spare! There shall be an abundance of the water of which before they could not find a single drop! When God is gracious to a soul, He is gracious. When His mercy is made to enter a man's heart, then He pours floods upon him. No little Grace will God bestow, but endless Grace, and boundless Grace, "and crown that Grace with glory, too."

19, 20. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the cypress tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it. May these gracious promises be fulfilled in you and me, that we may praise our faithful Covenant-keeping God forever and ever! Amen.

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