

The Pilgrim's Longings

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true Christian faith is proven by persevering in the pilgrim journey toward a heavenly country, despite abundant opportunities and temptations to return to the world.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:15-16, Romans 7:24, Matthew 6:13

Topics: "Faith and Perseverance", "Christian Pilgrimage"

Description

In 'The Pilgrim's Longings,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the spiritual journey of the Christian as a pilgrim longing for a heavenly home. He emphasizes the reality of temptations and opportunities to return to worldly ways, yet highlights that true faith perseveres because of a desire for something better. Drawing from biblical examples and personal exhortation, Spurgeon encourages believers to remain steadfast and find their identity in Christ alone.

Transcript

'And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.'"Hebrews 11:15-16.

ABRAHAM left his country at God's command, and he never went back again. The proof of faith lies in perseverance. There is a sort of faith which does run well, but it is soon hindered, and it doth not obey the truth. That is not the faith to which the promise is given. The faith of God's elect continues and abides. Being connected with the living and incorruptible seed, it lives and abides for ever. Abraham returned not; Isaac returned not; Jacob returned not. The promise was to them as 'strangers and sojourners,' and so they continued. The apostle tells us, however, that they were not forced so to continue; they did not remain because they could not return. Had they been mindful of the place from whence they came out, they might have found opportunities to go back. Frequent opportunities came in their way; there was communication kept up between them and the old family house at Padan-Aram: they had news sometimes from the old quarters. More than that, there were messages exchanged, servants were sometimes sent, and you know there was a new relation entered into'did not Rebekah come from thence? And Jacob, one of the patriarchs, was driven to go down into the land, but he could not stay there; he was always unrestful, till at last he stole a march upon Laban and came back into the proper life'the life which he had chosen, the life which God had commanded him, the life of a pilgrim and a stranger in the land of promise. You see, then, they had many opportunities to have returned, to have settled comfortably, and

tilled the ground as their fathers did before them; but they continued to follow the uncomfortable shifting life of wanderers of the weary foot, who dwelt in tents, who own no foot of land'they were aliens in the country which God had given them by promise.

Now, our position is very similar to theirs. As many of us as have believed in Christ have been called out. The very meaning of a church is, 'called out by Christ.' We have been separated. I trust we know what it is to have gone without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. Henceforth, in this world we have no home, no true home for our spirits; our home is beyond the flood; we are looking for it amongst the unseen things; we are strangers and sojourners as all our fathers were, dwellers in this wilderness, passing through it to reach the Canaan which is to be the land of our perpetual inheritance.

I. I propose, then, first of all this evening, to speak to you upon the opportunities which we have had, and still have, to return to the old house, if we were mindful of it. Indeed, it seems to me as if the word 'opportunity' as it occurs in the text, were hardly strong enough to express the influence and incentive, the provocations and solicitations, by which, in our case, we have been urged. It is a wonder of wonders that we have not gone back to the world, with its sinful pleasures and its idolatrous customs. When I think of the strength of divine grace, I do not marvel that saints should persevere; but, when I remember the weakness of their nature, it seems a miracle of miracles that there should be one Christian in the world who could maintain his steadfastness for a single hour. It is nothing short of Godhead's utmost stretch of might that keeps the feet of the saints, and preserves them from going back to their old unregenerate condition. We have had opportunities to have returned. My brethren, we have such opportunities in our daily calling. Some of you are engaged in the midst of ungodly men, and those engagements supply you with constant opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excesses, to lapse into their forgetfulness of God, or even to take part in their blasphemies. Oh, have you not often strong inducements, if it were not for the grace of God, to become as they are? Or, if your occupation keeps you alone, yet, my brethren, there is one who is pretty sure to intrude upon our privacy, to corrupt our thoughts, to kindle strange desires in our breasts, to tantalise us with morbid fancies, and to seek our mischief. The Tempter he is, the Destroyer he would be, if we were not delivered from his snares. Ah, how frequently will solitude have temptations as severe as publicity could possibly bring. There are perils in company, but there are perils likewise in our loneliness. We have many opportunities to return. In the parlour, pleasantly conversing, or in the kitchen, perhaps, occupied with the day's work'toiling in the field, or trading on the mart, busy on the land or tossed about on the sea, there are critical seasons on which destiny itself might appear to hang contingent. Where can we fly to escape from these opportunities that haunt us everywhere and peril us in every thing? If we should mount upon the wings of the wind, could we find 'a lodge in some vast wilderness,' think ye, then, we might be quite clear from all the opportunities to go back to the old sins in which we once indulged? No. Each man's calling may seem to him to be more full of temptation than his fellow's. It is not so. Our temptations are pretty equally distributed, I dare say, after all, and all of us might say, that we find in our avocations, from hour to hour, many opportunities to return.

But, dear brethren, it is not merely in our business and in our calling; the mischief lies in our bone and in our flesh. Opportunities to return! Ah! Who that knows himself does not find strong, incentives to return. Ah! how often will our imagination paint sin in very glowing colors, and, though we loathe sin and loathe ourselves for thinking of it, yet how many a man might say, 'had it not been for divine grace, where should I have been?'for my feet had almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped.' How strong is the evil in the most upright man! How stern is the conflict to keep under the body, lest corruption should prevail. You may be diligent in secret prayer, and, perhaps, the devil may have seemed asleep till you began to pray,

and when you were most fervent, then will he also become most rampant. When you get nearer to God, Satan will sometimes seem to get nearer to you. Opportunities to return, as long as you are in this body, will be with you. To the very edge of Jordan you will meet with temptations. When you sit expectant on the banks of the last river, waiting, for the summons to cross, it may be that your fiercest temptation will come even then. Oh, this flesh, the body of this death-wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from it? But while it continues with me, I shall find opportunities to return.

So too, dear brethren and sisters, these opportunities to return are adapted to our circumstances and adjusted to any condition of life, and any change through which we may pass. For instance how often have professors, when they have prospered, found opportunities to return! I sigh to think of many that appeared to be very earnest Christians when they were struggling for bread, who have become very dull and cold now that they have grown rich and increased in goods. How often does it happen in this land of ours, that a poor earnest Christian has associated with the people of God at all meetings, and felt proud to be there, but he has risen in the world and stood an inch or two above others in common esteem, and he could not go with God's people any longer: he must seek out the world's church and join in to get a share of the respectability and prestige that will always congregate in the domain of fashion. Henceforth, the man has turned aside from the faith, if not altogether in his heart, at least in his life. Beware of the high places: they are very slippery. There is not all the enjoyment you may think to be gathered in retirement and in ease. On the contrary, luxury often pulleth up, and abundance makes the heart to swell with vanity. If any of you are prospering in this world, oh watch, for you are in imminent danger of being mindful to return to the place whence you came out.

But, the peril is as instant every whit in adversity. Alas, I have had to mourn over Christian men at least I thought they were such who have waxed very poor, and when they have grown poor, they hardly felt they could associate with those they knew in better circumstances. I think they were mistaken in the notion that they would be despised. I should lie ashamed of the Christian who would despise his fellow, because God was dealing with him somewhat severely in Providence. Yet there is a feeling in the human heart, and, though there may be no unkind treatment, yet, oftentimes, the sensitive spirit is apt to imagine it, and I have observed some absent themselves by degrees from the assembly of God with a sense of shame. It is smoothing the way to return to your old place; and, indeed, I have not wondered when I have seen some professors grow cold, when I have thought where they were compelled to live, and how they have been constrained to pass their time. Perhaps they were living at home before, but now they have to take a room where they can have no quiet, but where sounds of blasphemy greet them, or, in some cases, where they have to go to the workhouse, and be far away from all Christian intercourse or anything that could comfort them. It is only God's grace that can keep your graces alive under such circumstances. You see, whether you grow rich or whether you grow poor, you will have these opportunities to return. If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities: it will be something else that will prevent you, for these opportunities are plentiful and countless.

Opportunities to return! Let me say just one thing more about them. They are often furnished by the example of others.

'When any turn from Zion's way,

Alas, what numbers do!

Methinks I hear my Savior say,

Wilt thou forsake me too?'

The departures from the faith of those whom we highly esteem are, at least while we are young, very severe trials to us. We keenly suspect whether that religion can be true which was feigned so cunningly and betrayed so wantonly, by one who seemed to be a model, but proved to be a hypocrite. It staggers us: we cannot make it out. Opportunities to return you have now; but ah! may grace be given you so that, if others play the Judas, instead of leading you to do the same, it may only bind you more fast to your Lord, and make you walk more carefully, lest you also prove a son of perdition.

And ah, my brethren and sisters, if some of us were to return, we should have this opportunity'a cordial welcome from our former comrades. None of our old friends would refuse to receive us. There is many a Christian who, if he were to go back to the gaiety of the world, would find the world await him with open arms. He was the favourite of the ball-room once; he was the wit 'that set the table in a roar;' he was the man who above all was courted when he moved in the circles of the vain and frivolous: glad enough would they be to see him come back. What a shout of triumph would they raise, and how would they fraternize with him! Oh, may the day never come to you, you young people especially, who have lately put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and professed his name, when you shall be welcomed by the world, but may you for ever forget your kindred and your father's house, so shall the king greatly desire your beauty, for he is the Lord, and worship you him. Separation from the world will endear you to the Savior, and bring you into conscious enjoyment of his presence; but, of opportunities to return there is no lack.

Perhaps, you will say, 'Why does the Lord make them so plentiful? Could he not have kept us from temptation?' There is no doubt he could, but it was never the Master's intention that we should all be hothouse plants. He taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' but, at the same time, he does lead us there, and intends to do it, and this for the proving of our faith, to see whether it be true faith or not. Depend upon it, faith that is never tried is not true faith. It must be sooner or later exercised. God does not create useless things: he intends that the faith he gives should have its test, should glorify his name. These opportunities to return are meant to try your faith, and they are sent to you to prove that you are a volunteer soldier. Why, if grace was a sort of chain that manacled you, so that you could not leave your Lord; if it had become a physical impossibility to forsake the Savior, there would be no credit in it. He that does not run away because his legs are too weak, does not prove himself a hero; but he that could run, but will not run; he that could desert his Lord, but will not desert him, has within him a principle of grace stronger than any fetter could be'the highest, firmest, noblest bond that unites a man to the Savior. By this shall you know whether you are Christ's or not. When you have opportunity to return, if you do not return, that shall prove you are his. Two men are going along a road, and there is a dog behind them. I do not know to which of them that dog belongs, but I shall be able to tell you directly. They are coming to a crossroad: one goes to the right, the other goes to the left. Now which man does the dog follow? That is his master. So when Christ and the world go together, you cannot tell which you are following; but, when there is a separation, and Christ goes one way, and your interest and your pleasure seem to go the other way, if you can part with the world and keep with Christ, then you are one of his. After this manner these opportunities to return may serve us a good purpose: they prove our faith, while they try our character; thus helping us to see whether we are indeed the Lord's or not.

But, we must pass on (for we have a very wealthy text) to notice the second point.

II. We cannot take any opportunity to go back, because we desire something better than we could get by returning to that country from whence we came out. An insatiable desire has been implanted in us by divine grace which urges us to'

'Forget the steps already trod,

And onward press our way.'

Notice how the text puts it: "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Brethren, you desire something better than this world, do you not? Has the world ever satisfied you? Perhaps it did when you were dead in sin. A dead world may satisfy a dead heart; but ever since you have known something of better things, and brighter realities, have you been ever contented with earthly things and emptier vanities? Perhaps you have tried to fill your soul with the daintiest provisions the world can offer; to wit'God has prospered you, and you have said, 'Oh, this is well.' Your children have been about you, you have had many household joys, and you have said, 'I could stay here for ever.' Did not you find very soon that there was a thorn in the flesh? Did you ever gather a rose in this world that was altogether without a thorn? Hare you not been obliged to say, after you have had all that the world could give you, 'Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity?' I am sure it has been so with me, with you, with all my kinsfolk in Christ, and with all my yokefellows in his service. All God's saints would confess that were the Lord to say to them, 'You shall have all the world, and that shall be your portion,' they would be broken-hearted men. 'Nay, my Lord,' they would reply, 'do not put me off with these biding presents; feed me not upon these husks. Though thou shouldst give me Joseph's lot, the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills,' 'Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey;' yea, though thou shouldst confer on me the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, I would prefer before them all the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush. Give me thyself, and take these all away, if so it please thee, but do not, my Lord, do not think I can be content with Egypt since I have set forth for Canaan, or that I can settle down in the wilderness now that I am journeying to the land of promise. We desire something better.

There is this about a Christian that, even when he does not enjoy something better, he desires it; of that, verily, I am quite sure. How much of character is revealed in our desires. I felt greatly encouraged when I read this, 'Now they desire a better'"The word 'country' has been inserted by our translators. It weakens the sense; vague but vast is the craving expressed in the sentence, 'They desire a better'"I know I long for something far better, something infinitely preferable to that which my eyes can see or that my tongue can express. I do not always enjoy that something better. Dark is my path; I cannot see my Lord; I cannot enjoy his presence; sometimes I am like one that is banished from him; but I desire his blessing, I desire his presence; and, though to desire may be but a little thing, let me say a good desire is more than nature ever grew: grace has given it. It is a great thing to be desirous. 'They desire a better country.' And, because we desire this better thing, we cannot go back and be content with things which gratified us once.

More than that, if ever the child of God gets entangled for awhile, he is uneasy by reason of it. Abraham's slips, for he had one or two, were made when he had left the land, and gone down among the Philistines; but he was not easy there: he must come back again. And Jacob'he had found a wife'nay, two'in Laban's land, but he was not content there. No, no child of God can be, whatever he may find in this world. We shall never find a heaven here. We may hunt the world through, and say, 'This looks like a little paradise,' but there is not any paradise this side of the skies, for a child of God at any rate. There is enough out there in the farm yard for the hogs, but there is not that which is suitable for the children. There is enough in the world for sinners, but not for saints. They have stronger, sharper, and more vehement desires, for they

have a nobler life within them, and they desire a better country, and even if they get entangled for awhile in this country, and in a certain measure identified with citizens of it, they are ill at ease'their citizenship is in heaven, and they cannot rest anywhere but there. After all, we confess to-night, and rejoice in the confession, that our best hopes are for things that are out of sight: our expectations are our largest possessions. The things that we have a title to, that we value, are ours to-day by faith: we do not enjoy them yet. But when our heirship shall be fully manifested, and we shall come to the full ripe age'oh, then shall we come into our inheritance, to our wealth, to the mansions, and to the glory, and to the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thus you see the reason why the Christian cannot go back. Though he has many opportunities he does not embrace any, he shrinks with repugnance from them all, for, through divine grace, he has had produced in his heart desires for something better.

Even when he does not realize as yet, or actually enjoy, that infinite good, which is something better than creature comfort or worldly ambition, the desires themselves become mighty bonds that keep him from returning to his former state. Dear brethren, let us cultivate these desires more and more. If they have such a separating, salutary, sanctifying influence upon our heart, and effect upon our character, in keeping us from the world, let us cultivate them much. Do you think that we meditate enough upon heaven? Look at the miser. When does he forget his gold? He dreams of it. He has locked it up tonight and he goes to bed, but he is afraid he heard a footstep down the stairs, and he goes to see. He looks to the iron safe: he would be quite sure that it is well secured. He cannot forget his dear gold. Let us think of heaven, of Christ, and of the blessings of the covenant, and let us thus keep our desires wide awake, and stimulate them to active exercise. The more they draw us to heaven, the more they withdraw us from the world.

III. It would be unreasonable if we did not vehemently resist every opportunity and every solicitation to go back.

The men of faith to whom the apostle referred in our text were not only strangers and pilgrims, but it is specially observed that they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They were a grand company. From an unit they had multiplied into a countless host. Sprang there not even of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable? Now, brethren, you see we have here a very strong reason for not returning. It is because you are the descendants, the spiritual descendants, of the patriarchs. Let me try to show you how urgent a motive for steadfastness this is. Practically, it comprises two or three considerations of the highest moment. One thing it implies very obviously is that you thoroughly admire their example and fervently emulate their spirit. As you have glanced over the scroll of history, or narrowly scanned the records of men's lives, the pomp of Pharaoh has not dazzled you, but the purity of Joseph has charmed you; the choice of Moses was to your taste, though it did involve leaving a court where he was flattered, for fellowship with enslaved kinsmen by whom he was suspected; and, you would rather have been with Daniel in the lions' den than with Darius on the throne of empire. You have transferred their strong will to your own deliberate choice. And, when the jeer has been raised against canting methodists, you have said, 'I am one of them.' You have confessed as occasion served before the world, you have professed as duty called before the church, you have accepted the consequences as honesty demanded before angels and men. Therefore, in your heart of hearts you feel that you cannot go back. The vows of God are upon you. It is well they are. Review them often: refresh your memory with them frequently; recur to them and renew them in every time of trial and temptation. Howbeit, repent of them never, or woe betide you. There is a secret virtue in the confession, if it be steadfastly adhered to and zealously maintained. It is a

talisman, believe me, against the contagion of an evil atmosphere that might otherwise instil poison into your constitution.

Again, there is another thing; you have joined yourself to an ancient fraternity that has something more than rules to guide or legends to captivate; for it has a combination of both, seeing it is rich in poetic lore. Why, it is on this that patriotism feeds as its daintiest morsel. 'Thy statutes,' said David, 'have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.' Brother! there hath no sorrow befallen thee but what thy noble ancestors have celebrated in cheery tones, and set to music in cheerful strains. Oh, beloved! if you could forget the statutes, can you ever fail to remember the songs? There has never been a revival in the church that has not witnessed to the value of our psalmody. God be praised for our psalms and spiritual songs. Oh, how often they have made melody in our hearts to the Lord! While our voices blend, do not our very souls become more and more richly cemented? They are, in truth, the pilgrim's solace.

Another thing strikes me. I should not like you to overlook it. There is, in this chapter, a special commendation for faith in a pleasing variety of operations. But the speciality of the strangers and pilgrims is that they all died in faith. So, then, you cannot go back, because you cannot accomplish the end for which you went forward till you die. You have joined the company that makes the goal of life the object for which you live. Your aim is to make a noble exit. 'Prepare to meet thy God' was the motto you started with. To go back can hardly cross your thoughts, when to look back seems to you charged with peril. Our lease of mortal life is fast running out. The time of our sojourn on earth is getting more and more brief. Therefore, because our salvation is nearer than when we first believed, it is but meet that our desire to reach the better country, and to enter the heavenly city should become more and more vehement, as 'we nightly pitch our roving tent a day's march nearer home.' It comes to this, brethren. You feel that you have little to show for your faith. It never built an ark like Noah; it never offered a sacrifice like Abraham; it never subdued kingdoms like Joshua; it never quenched the violence of fire as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Well, be it so; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved; and all those that die in faith are gathered with the great cloud of witnesses. Is not this enough to cheer the rank and file of the church?

IV. But, I must close with the sweetest part of the text, wherein it is shown that we have a great and blessed assurance vouchsafed to us as an acknowledgment, on the part of God, of those opportunities, and those yearnings persisted in. 'Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' Because they are strangers, add because they will not go back to their old abode, 'therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.' He might well be ashamed of that. What poor people God's people are! poor, many of them, in circumstances, but how many of them I might very well call poor as to spiritual things. I do not think if any of us had such a family as God has, we should ever have patience with them. We cannot, when we judge ourselves rightly, have patience with ourselves; but, how is it that God bears with the ill manners of such a froward, weak, foolish, forgetful generation as his people are. He might well be ashamed to be called their God, if he looked upon them as they are, and estimated them upon their merits. Own them! How can he own them? Does he not himself sometimes say of them, 'How can I put them among the children?' Yet he devises means, and brings about the purposes of his grace. Viewed as they are, they may be compared to a rabble in so many respects, that it is marvellous he is not ashamed of them. Still, he never does discountenance them, and he proves that he is not ashamed of them, for he calls himself their God. 'I will be your God,' saith he, and he oftentimes seems to speak of it as a very joyful thing to his own heart. 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' While he calls himself their God, he never forbids them to call him their God. In the presence of the great ones of the earth they may call him their God anywhere and he is not ashamed to be

so called. Matchless condescension this! Have you not sometimes heard of a man who has become rich and has risen in the world, who has had some poor brother or some distant relative. When he has seen him in the street, he has been obliged to speak to him and own him. But oh, how reluctantly it was done. I dare say he wished him a long way off, especially if he had some haughty acquaintance with him at the time, who would perhaps turn round, and say, 'Why, who is that wretched, seedy-looking fellow you spoke to?' He does not like to say, 'That's my brother;' or, 'That's a relative of mine.' Not so our Lord Jesus Christ. However low his people may sink, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. They may look up to him in all the depths of their degradation. They may call him a brother. He is in very fact a brother, born for their adversity, able and ready to redress their grievances, he is not ashamed to call them brethren. One reason for this seems to me to be, because he does not judge of them according to their present circumstances, but much rather according to their pleasant prospects. He takes account of what he has prepared for them. Notice the text, 'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.' They are poor now, but God, to whom things to come are things present, sees them in their fair white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. All you can see in that poor child of God is a hard-working laboring man, mocked and despised of his fellows. But what does God see in him? He sees in him a dignity and a glory assimilated to his own. He hath put all things under the feet of such a man as that, and crowned him with glory and honor in the person of Christ, and the angels themselves are ministering servants to such. You see his outward attire, not his inner self; you see the earthly tabernacle, but the spirit newborn, immortal and divine; you see not that. Howbeit, God does. Or, if you have spiritual discernment to perceive the spiritual creature, you only see it as it is veiled by reason of the flesh, and beclouded by the atmosphere of this world; but he sees it as it will appear, when it shall be radiant like unto Christ, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. God sees the poorest, the least proficient disciple as a man in Christ; a perfect man come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; such indeed as he will be in that day when he shall see Christ, for then he shall be like him as he is. It seems too, in the text, that God looks to what he had prepared for these poor people. He hath prepared for them a city. Methinks, that by what he has prepared for them, we may judge how he esteems and loves them; estimating them by what he means them to be, rather than by what they appear to be at present. Look at this preparation just a minute. 'he hath prepared for them'—'them.' Though I delight to preach a free gospel, and to preach it to every creature under heaven, we must never forget to remind you of the speciality. 'He hath prepared for them a city'—that is, for such as are strangers and foreigners; for such as have faith, and, therefore, have left the world, and gone out to follow Christ. 'He hath prepared for them'—not 'for all of you'—only for such of you as answer the description on which we have been meditating has he prepared 'a city.'

Note what it is he has made ready for them. It is a city. This indicates a permanent abode. They dwelt in tents; Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; but he has prepared for them a city. Here we are tent dwellers, and the tent is soon to be taken down. 'We know that this earthly house of our tent shall be dissolved, but we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' 'He hath prepared a city.' A city is a place of genial associations. In a lonely hamlet one has little company. In a city, especially where all the inhabitants shall be united in one glorious brotherhood, the true communism of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity may be realised in the purest sense and highest possible degree. In a city such as this there are plentiful occasions for intercourse, where mutual interests shall enhance mutual joy. 'He hath prepared a city.' It is a city too possessing immunities, and conferring dignity upon its residents. To be a burgess of the City of London is thought to be a great honor, and upon princes is it sometimes conferred; but, we shall have the highest honor that can be given, when we shall be citizens of the city which God has prepared.

I must not dwell on this theme, delightful as it is; I want a few words with you, my friends, direct and personal, before I close. Do not wonder, those of you who are the children of God, do not wonder if you have discomforts here. If you are what you profess to be, you are strangers: you do not expect men of this world to treat you as members of their community. If they do, be afraid. Dogs don't bark as a man goes by that they know: they bark at strangers. When people persecute you and slander you, no marvel. If you are a stranger, they naturally bark at you. Do not expect to find the comforts in this world that you crave after, that your flesh would long for. This is our inn, not our home. We tarry for a night: we are away in the morning. We may bear the annoyances of the eventide and the night, for the morning will break so soon. Remember that your greatest joy, while you are a pilgrim, is your God. So the text says, 'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.' Do you want a richer source of consolation than you have? Here is one that can never be diminished, much less exhausted. When the created streams are dry, go to this eternal fountain, and find it ever springing up. Your joy is your God: make your God your joy.

Now, what shall be said to those who are not strangers and foreigners? Ah, you dwell in a land where you find some sort of repose; but I have heavy tidings for you. This land in which you dwell, and all the works thereof, must be burned up. The city of which you, who have never been converted to Christ, are citizens, is a City of Destruction, and, as is its name, such will be its end. The King will send his armies against that guilty city and destroy it, and if you are citizens of it, you will lose all you have—you will lose your souls—lose yourselves. 'Whither away?' saith one—'Where can I find comfort then and security?' You must do as Lot did, when the angels pressed him and said, 'Haste to the Mount lest thou be consumed.' To what mountain, say you, shall I go? The mountain of safety is Calvary. Where Jesus died, there you shall live. There is death everywhere else but there. But there is life arising from his death. Oh, fly to him. 'But how?' saith one. Trust him. God gave his Son, equal with himself, to bear the burden of human sin; and he died, a substitute for sinners, a real substitute, an efficient substitute, for all who trust in him. If thou wilt trust thy soul with Jesus, thou art saved. Thy sin was laid on him: it is forgiven thee. It was blotted out when he nailed the handwriting of ordinances that were against thee to his cross. Trust him now and you are saved; you shall become, henceforth, a stranger and a pilgrim. In the better land you shall find the rest which you never can find here, and need not wish to find, for the land is polluted; let us away from it. The curse has fallen: let us get away to the country that never was cursed, to the city that is for ever blessed, Where Jesus dwells there may we find a home and abide for aye. God add his blessing to this discourse, and give a blessing to your souls, for Jesus Christ' sake. Amen.

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