

Predestination

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon explores the profound themes of God's predestination, mercy, and the assurance of being His children despite human failings.

Scripture: Numbers 23:19, Job 23:13, Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6, Isaiah 30:21, Jeremiah 3:19, Daniel 4:35, John 1:13, Romans 11:29, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Gods Mercy"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the unfailing mercy and inexhaustible patience of God towards His wayward children, highlighting His gracious dealings in restoring, saving, and delivering them from bondage. He emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's will and experiencing His lovingkindness and tender mercy. The sermon delves into the significance of key phrases in Jeremiah 3, such as the Father's question 'How shall I put thee among the children?' and the child's privilege of calling God 'My Father,' ultimately leading to the child's everlasting security in not turning away from God.

Transcript

"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from Me." (Jeremiah 3:19)

Very precious are the Gospel or Evangelical promises which the Holy Ghost has bequeathed to the Church and people of God in this chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy a chapter which shows forth the wayward nature and wandering condition of all God's children when left to themselves, and in striking contrast thereto, the unfailing mercy and inexhaustible patience of Israel's covenant JEHOVAH. Yes, here we have a rich display of His gracious dealings with them in all their varied wanderings, failings, imperfections, and falls: how He restores them when fallen, saves them from the deep pit of corruption, and delivers them in His own way and time from bondage and vile slavery, bringing them into the glorious liberty of His children, and into the enjoyment of His lovingkindness and tender mercy.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the literal, temporal, or natural circumstances under which Jeremiah wrote this portion for the comfort of the captive Israelites, to give them a little consolation amid the suffering and oppression surrounding them at that very time; but, in humble dependence upon the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, look at the various displays of Jehovah's love, mercy, and patience during a period of His people's wandering from Him, more when they were living and acting in

direct opposition to His mind and will concerning them. After some faithful and painful descriptions of what they were in themselves, He positively declares He is married unto them, that He will bring them one of a city and two of a family to Zion. (Jer. 3:14) Listen to this gracious promise: "And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. 3:15) In infinite wisdom and magnanimous mercy He secures their return to, and abiding in Him, and their full possession of the inheritance promised to their fathers, where they shall enjoy an immunity from trouble, trial, and from danger.

Dwell upon the first, a very important word "but."

The mind, will, purpose, and pleasure of JEHOVAH "I said."

The Father's gracious question "How shall I put thee among the children."

The Father's unspeakable gift "And give thee a pleasant land."

The child's privilege "Thou shalt call Me, My Father."

The child's everlasting security "And shalt not turn away from Me."

I. This short, but important word "But" is truly wonderful as seen in its connection. If we go through the world, we find man has his buts, ifs, peradventures, and perhapses in profusion, each manifesting opposition to the great and glorious Jehovah. Yet all His dealings are in accordance with His own Divine pleasure, His sovereign will, His unerring decrees, His unalterable predestination, His predetermination, ere the worlds were framed. All is fitly framed in covenant. Now, when God declares the counsel of His will, poor, puny, proud man is sure to spring up with his accursed "but." Whensoever God appears in the manifestation of His unerring sovereignty, the devil will question His right to the exercise thereof, and cast his slur on Jehovah's immutability. The essence of human nature is to question His right to do as He will with His own, yet it is gloriously true that all "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." (Rom. 11:29) What is the meaning of repentance here? Simply, He cannot change His mind. "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it: Or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19) Listen again to that glorious twenty-third of Job: "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." (Job 23:13) "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35) Look also at Psalm 135:6: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places." "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Ps. 115:3) Now, this is the God that I love to worship and adore, and I grieve because I cannot worship, love, and serve Him as I would.

The "But" of the text is God's all-glorious and all-gracious "But." It appears after a painful description of what His people are in themselves idolatrous, adulterous, incorrigible. We find the same in those precious portions Nehemiah 9; and Psalms 78; and Psalm 106. God's "But" is always proof against the but, if, perhaps, or peradventure of Satan, or of all His foes combined. It is JEHOVAH'S "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further," meeting and defeating Satan's accusations in the court of conscience. This blessed "But" meets the weak and weary child of grace in his failures, falls, wanderings, and divergencies from the straight and narrow path. It is the voice of pure, electing love, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." (Isa. 30:21) Now, why does this "But" appear here? If we look through the chapter we shall see the declaration

of Jehovah's great mercy, and the vile whoredoms of Israel and Judah. Notice the seventh verse: "And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me; but she returned not." What! Say some, if God calls, is there power in the creature to resist His will? Say, rather, such is the utter helplessness of the creature, that he is perfectly unable to obey God's call. When His covenant command goes forth, He carries His word by the power of the Holy Ghost to the heart of His child, and as one has well said, "God's commandings are God's enablings." The call and the command are nothing in themselves, and when Jehovah sees His call despised by one of His own; when threatenings, promises, entreaties prevail not, He will come Himself and turn His child from the paths of perversity to those precious privileges which abound in the Son of His love.

God's "Buts" are so glorious, that I love to linger over them. Let us just look at one in the seventy-eighth Psalm. His people are woefully described. They sinned, they believed not, they flattered Him with their lips, they lied unto Him with their tongues, their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. There we have the creature side of the picture. When Jehovah appears, not in flames of wrath, and death, and hell (Oh, no), His glorious "But" stirs the swelling and surging tide of rebellion and enmity, and He richly displays what a glorious God He is. "BUT He, full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned He His anger, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." (Ps. 78:39)

II. The mind, will, purpose and pleasure of Jehovah, conveyed in the words, "But I said." Further on in the text He repeats the words thus, "And I said." Why is this? Because He will show forth His marvellous patience; and though His children manifest ignorance, dullness, and indifference, yet He will, as He is wont, "teach them again" (Mark 10:1) He repeats His lessons to His scholars because of the repeated and reiterated accusations of Satan in the court of conscience, because of the treachery, deceitfulness, and wretched depravity of our hearts. Oh, how oft we wander from Him in thought, purpose, imagination, and desire! See how the Psalmist cries in his experience of these things: "I hate vain thoughts." He knew how hateful and irksome they were, and therefore hated them. Oh, my friends, it is a blessed thing to know that these vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (Jer. 4:14) Blessed be the great and glorious name of our covenant God, He will see to it that the Testifier, the Witness to His truth, shall oust all these vain and troublesome lodgers which distract the minds and disturb the quiet of all His children.

"But I said." When God speaks in covenant His word must be accomplished and His will be done. We have this demonstrated in creation: "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Ps. 33:9) Balaam, that wretched soothsayer, who had the Spirit of God in his lips, but the devil in his heart, said, "Hath He not spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19) Yes, hell may threaten, the devil assault, the world persecute, vain thoughts arise, and perplexing providences annoy, yet Israel's God is the same to Israel still. Now, says Jehovah, this is My people, though Satan declares the contrary, and her enemies wag the head and exultingly cry, "Is this Zion whom no man seeketh after?" (Jer. 30:17) The world, the flesh, and the devil may argue: Can it be possible that God has taken such pains with this obstinate, stiffnecked people whom the kings of the earth have led captive at their will? God replies: Yes, these circumstances, and the varied trials and temptations of My covenant people are all in accordance with My purpose and pleasure. They must be brought down in self to experience their corruption and depravity, and see and know what a God I am in their salvation and deliverance therefrom.

"But I said." God seems to turn in upon Himself away from the rebellion and ingratitude of His people to His covenant of grace and glory treasured up in Himself for His own poor captive Israel. He cannot deal

with them as they are in themselves, for He is of purer eyes to look upon iniquity, and, "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (Ps. 130:3) But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." This glorious God spoke in covenant before the worlds were made; in Himself He found a way for His mercy; and now, by the irresistible power and gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost, He expostulates with His child and says: "How shall I put thee among the children?" This brings us to consider,

III. The Father's gracious question "How shall I put thee among the children?" To look at this question apart from the covenant purposes of Jehovah is to engage in a labour of vanity and vexation of spirit, but to behold it in the light of His covenant relationship with His people, is both profitable and precious. Who are the children? The children are the elect of God. If by the Holy Ghost we can trace back the covenant love and grace of the Father to its supercreation glories, then, before time was, He broke forth from the solitudes in which He dwelt and selected a people to Himself, a people predestinated to the adoption of children, a people near to Himself.

Ah, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from the womb of His Divine purpose He brought forth an innumerable company of elect children who should be distinguished as the travail of the soul of His own dear Son! This is all done, not from a necessity of His nature, but by the sovereignty of His will. He set up His own true, proper, and eternal Son, the Firstborn or Chief among many brethren, as His First Elect, and in Him He beholds a family eternally and gloriously complete.

In this glorious transaction, Jehovah, in His infinite wisdom and consummate skill, drew the plan of His people's glorification in which was secured their redemption, pardon, justification, regeneration, acceptance, and eternal preservation. See how this is stated in that glorious eighth of Romans: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Mark you! It is not as it appears with the italics, "to be conformed;" but "conformed to the image of His Son." With God all is in the present tense, and as He is One Eternal Now, One Ever-present, so all is ever-present to His gaze. So we see all His people predestinated to the adoption of sons. Predestination an eternal act, adoption an act in time. What is adoption? To take the child of another and treat it as one's own. Did God do this before all worlds? Nay! His elect ones were everlastingly His, according to the declaration of the God-Man in His precious prayer on the behalf of His elect brethren: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." (John 17:6) So Jehovah's sons and daughters are His by His sovereign decree, according to His everlasting purpose; and though all fell in Adam, and are possessed of a corrupt nature and a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, yet He comes down to them, and, by the power of His Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, brings them out of the lost family of Adam the first, and gives them an experimental standing in the elect, redeemed, justified, and (in the eye of God) glorified family of Adam the Last.

See! We are not His simply by adoption; but by true, spiritual regeneration: "Of His own will begat He us." (James 1:18) Thus we are the eternally-predestinated, truly-begotten, spiritually-regenerated, and graciously-adopted children of God. The Lo-ammi of the past is ours no longer: for "in the place where it was said unto us, Ye are not My people, there are we called the children of the living God." (Rom. 9:26) Underlying the ruins of the fall, God's pure, white, silver line of election runs, and in time it must appear by the sovereign, new-creation work of God the Holy Ghost.

Ah! This is gloriously true! Satan's purposes all frustrated, his works destroyed, his purposes rendered ineffectual, elect brands are plucked from the eternal burnings, and cleansed, clothed, and crowned, they stand gloriously complete in Christ their Head. Look at that description given of the redeemed family with the Lamb of God on Mount Zion in Rev. 14:4,5: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God." In the world they are bespattered with the filth and mire of sin, and oft sink deep in the pit of corruption; but God's judgment concerning them is: "They are without fault before the throne of God." The cry of each and every one is, "I am black;" but the voice of the Best Beloved whispers in tones of silvery sweetness, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." (Songs 4:7) In the matchless perfections of a precious Christ all His people stand gloriously and eternally complete.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" This is a question put to a person: intense individuality is thus set forth. How shall I put thee?" Here we see God dealing personally with the waiting heart of His child. And mark! He alone does the work: "How shall I put thee?" This blessed relationship originated in the mind of Jehovah, and it is by His will and power, without our aid, acquiescence, or activity, that we are put among the children. Arminians and free-willers understand not this, they would have us believe that they are the authors of their own existence; but the child of God spiritually taught knows that he is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) No freak in nature can make a man the chooser of his own father, and nothing but a miracle of grace can bring a poor sinner to see in the great and glorious Jehovah his own God and Father in the Son of His love.

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," (Eph. 2:10) is the confession of the elect, redeemed, and regenerate souls; and they know full well that He must carry it on and finish it to the day of Jesus Christ. Let us look at a portion or two where the rich and magnanimous grace of our God shines forth most gloriously. Go to Ephesians 2:1: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Did you notice that expression "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind?" We cannot half comprehend it: there is a fullness of abomination and a depth of depravity couched beneath it that devils would almost be ashamed to own. But look at that title, "children of wrath."

Does this refer to God's wrath? Never! He loves with an everlasting love. But see! "The law worketh wrath." (Rom. 4:15) When the law comes home, it reveals the depravity and enmity of proud human nature. It proves me full of wrath, and my mind to be "enmity against God." Let us transpose the order of these words from "children of wrath" to "wrathful children." Do you say that is far-fetched? Look at that title in Ephesians verse 2: "Children of disobedience." Whose disobedience is that?

Surely not God's! Such an idea is presumptuous and blasphemous. The disobedience belongs to the children, so does the wrath. They walk by nature in disobedience and enmity against Him. "But!" Ah! Here we have one of God's glorious "Buts!" "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." (Eph. 2:4,5) No matter

how corrupt, depraved, or dead in sins the child of God may be, because of the everlasting, unalienable love of the Father, because of the superlative worth of the person, work, and intercession of the Christ of God before the throne, he must be sought, brought, and taught to know and delight in his position and privilege as a child of the Majesty of heaven.

Look at Jehovah's rich and sovereign grace as opened up in 1 Cor. 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators:" then comes an awfully black catalogue: "And such were some of you: But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." None but a covenant God and Father could work such wonders of grace and mercy.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" Well, now, my dear friends and brethren in Him whom our souls love, if God dealt with us as we are by nature, as we are in ourselves, or according to our frames and feelings, among the children we can never be put. I have not a particle of sympathy with those who would build up their sonship on their fluctuating fancies, feelings, and frames. Oh, no! Christ in His glorious person and work is the only foundation for a poor "tossed with tempest and not comforted" child of God to rest upon. If I begin to look at what I am, what I have been, what I have felt, what I have enjoyed; where is it? Before the chilling blasts of temptation, and perplexed with the varied and intricate circumstances around me, I should utterly fail were it not for the supporting arm and loving heart of my never-failing God and Friend. Who can tell how oft he offendeth? God's Ephraim may wander and go on frowardly in the way of his heart; but Ephraim's God is still the same, and beyond the limits of His love, he can never roam. The Father expostulates: "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:20) Look how Ephraim's wanderings and changes are depicted in that glorious book of Hosea! Yet Jehovah's patience is not worn out. He cries: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee." (Hos. 11:8,9) Ephraim merits damnation; but God will neither damn nor drive him from His gracious presence. No! He will open up the treasures of infinite affection to wean him from sin and self, and as though He knew not how to be gracious enough He still cries: "What shall I do unto thee?" Blessed be His name, He will bring all His Ephraims into sweet experimental union with Himself, bless them with the possession of all spiritual blessings in Christ, and give them to know what it is feelingly to be put among the children.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" Don't you see how He does it in the case of the prodigal son? In that beautiful chapter, Luke 15., He describes the lost sheep, the lost silver and the lost son. The silver lost, the sheep wandering, the son wayward. In the lost son we see an Ephraim indeed, such as is described in that beautiful allegory of Hosea, and in Jeremiah 3. The father divides unto his two sons all that he is and all that he has "HIS LIVING." What could he give more? The elder received as much as the younger. Ah! My dear brethren in Him, this parable shows us that we cannot keep what grace is given to us, but blessed be God He keeps it for us. The younger son spends all. He is in want, destitute; but the time must come when Ephraim must say: "What have I to do any more with idols?" Yes, every idol God will utterly abolish, and Ephraim will thoroughly hate. The Father's mind has gone forth, and it shall be accomplished: "From all your idols will I cleanse you." In want and destitution young Ephraim remembers his father's house, his father's board, his father's bounty, his father's heart! He says, "I will arise and go to

my father (father, though in a far off country), and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of they hired servants." The father heard all that. The son arose, and when he was yet a great way off! How far? "A great way off!" He couldn't see the father, but the father could see him. Ah! There is the beauty of the new covenant verities! Do notice the activities of the father! The father saw him. The father had compassion upon him. The father ran. The father fell on his neck. The father kissed him. That kiss of unalterable affection broke open the fountains of the great deep, and the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Nothing concerning service now. The father's kiss had chased away the spirit of cold legality, and the sweet Spirit of adoption fulfilled in his experience the predestinating purposes of eternity, giving him to realize the blessedness of that truth, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. 4:6,7) Blessings upon His Name, He is the same kind loving God still, and His kiss is as warm and precious today as it was in the days of old.

"How shall I put thee among the children?" How? I will run after thee. I will embrace thee. I will allure thee with the kisses of My mouth. My arms of mercy shall shield and protect thee, though thy brethren may look on and wonder, and object to such marvellous grace. Elder brethren, with their deep experience and consistent walk, may question the right of their younger relative; but Jehovah will overcome all with the blessings of His house, the bounty of His board, and the love of His heart. Look at the gracious answer of a covenant God: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." "All that I have." The robe of everlasting righteousness to clothe thee, the fatted calf to feed thee, and the ring of everlasting love to secure thee. "How shall I put thee among the children?" Blessed be God, he knows how and when to do it. None but He, a covenant God, can accomplish this, and He will do it until the last elect child that shall tread these dreary wilds of sin and death shall be brought home to the ingathered family and ushered into the realms of everlasting and uninterrupted felicity.

IV. The Father's gracious gift "And give thee a pleasant land." A wondrous spiritual meaning is couched beneath these words. They have reference to the allotment of Palestine or the Promised Land to God's covenant people Israel. He declares by Hosea, in that marvellous prophecy: "I have called My son out of Egypt." First, in bringing His ancient people from Pharaoh's yoke. Second, in the return of our blessed Lord, the Holy Child Jesus, from Egypt, where He had been sheltered from the wrath and vindictive fury of Herod.

Third, in the call of all the members of His mystical body out of the Egypt of this world. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of Exodus we have a marvellous description of the Lord delivering Israel from Egypt. By Migdol and Baal-zephon, and in the straits of Pihahiroth He guards them, and amid the wilds and intricacies of the desert He marches and countermarches them, to the borders of their inheritance He brings them, and promises to conduct them into their long-looked-for home.

He will be eyes to them, but, no! They will judge by the sight of other eyes than God's! Spies are appointed to go before them. They go, they return, and their report of the land so distresses and distracts the people that they determine to stone their leaders. In Numbers 14. we have a pithy and beautiful description of the conflict between free-grace and free-will in the wilderness. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, rent their clothes as they beheld the miserable effect produced by the lying report of the rest of the spies concerning the land, and with a boldness which nothing but sovereign grace can give, they confront the whole "company of the children of Israel saying, The land which we passed through to search

it, is an exceedingly good land.

If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." These two men had simple reference to Jehovah and His promise: "If the Lord delight in us." This "if" is not one of doubt, hesitancy, or condition; but an evidential one. No question as to His willingness or ability to bring them into and give to them the land, or to the sons of Anak preventing this. Oh, no! Where God has a delight, there He will accomplish all His schemes of mercy.

He will bring us into the land. He will give it to us. He will do all. See how clearly Moses declares the sovereignty of God in this matter: "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of those nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that He may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Understand, therefore, that The LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people." (Deut. 9:4-6) Now, then! If the Lord graciously brings into the land of spiritual promise and Divine revelation, the land of covenant blessings and Gospel liberty, it is not because of what we are, or because of what we have done; but simply and solely because of His covenant purposes in the Son of His love. This is a pleasant land!

A land abounding with glorious promises, cheering prospects, peaceable habitations, quiet resting-places, and sure dwellings. Canaan of old teemed with its milk and honey, oil and water; but sin, the curse and death were found therein. In this pleasant land of covenant settlement and Gospel grace, righteousness, blessings, and life abound. In it, there is no condemnation; from it, there is no alienation. God has been truly favourable to this land, and glory dwells therein. A glorious land when opened up by God the ever-blessed Spirit: the Sun of Righteousness shines with healing in His wings, (Malachi 4:2) and showers of blessing come down in His season.

The voice of the Beloved is heard, leading His bride away from the cold, dark regions of spiritual death, bondage, legality, and corruption. "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth (the beauties, graces, and excellencies of the Spirit), the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land." (Songs 2:10-12) "Our land." The land of spiritual promise, Divine revelation, and Gospel liberty.

And who is the Turtle? God's Spirit. God's Holy dove. God's Carrier-Pigeon, who comes with sweet love-messages, warbles melodious love-songs in longing hearts, and reveals the loving, faithful heart of the Bridegroom to the waiting and adoring bride. Is it not a blessed, a glorious privilege to know that the true understanding of God's blessed Word and all means of grace are in the hands of God the Holy Ghost?

Not only have we a pleasant land, but a "goodly heritage of the hosts of nations." "All things are yours," is the sum of the inventory of the Christian's possessions. The wicked live for the sake of the Church. They are God's sword. God's battle-axe. God's hammer. God's rasp. God's file, for the polishing of His elect. Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba serve Jehovah's purpose of love to His Israel. Moab must prepare a covert, a cradle, a couch for God's outcasts, and He will compel them, by a mysterious necessity, to provide bread and water, ay, wine and royal dainties for the refreshment of His people. Why did God create the earth?

To build His Church upon it, and when the building is complete, what about the scaffolding? Terrible truth! Marvellous sovereignty! All destroyed!

V. The child's privilege "Thou shall call Me, My Father." Our covenant God will see to it that all His elect and blood-bought sons and daughters are brought to acknowledge and know Him as Father. Yes, and well may we, when blest with so glorious a privilege, sing with dear old Dr. Hawker:

"ABBA, FATHER,' Lord we call Thee,

Hallowed name from day to day;

'Tis Thy children's right to know Thee,

None but children 'ABBA' say."

Oh, my soul, thy covenant God and Father alone can speak the reconciling word, melt thee down at His feet, and bless thee with the rich and overpowering sense of His paternal affection. As the blessed Spirit of adoption moves within, sweetly witnessing to the Father's love and faithfulness, and testifying of the Saviour's love, blood, beauty, and bounty, a little "bubbling up" is known and felt, and the child dares to be free in the presence of the Majesty of heaven, and lisp, "My Father." Call this presumption? Blessed, precious presumption! Lord, bid me to presume. This is the earnest of the Spirit, the gracious foretaste of that eternal rest, peace, and felicity which awaits us beyond the flood. And now look at His glorious promise of

VI. The child's everlasting security "And shalt not turn away from Me." No, blessed be God, "they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of the Father's hand." (John 10:28,29) But it may, and has been said: "Though none can pluck them out of His hand, yet they have the will to go out." Will or no will, out they shall never go. Listen! "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." (Jer. 32:39,40) Ah! Look here, my poor, weak, and timid brother or sister! Brighter hopes and sweeter encouragements meet our view: "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good." (Jer. 32:41) That is the God that my soul truly loves! And when I feel the gracious movements of His blessed Spirit within my heart, then I can bow down and worship before Him. Look still further: "And I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart, and with My whole soul." Not a half-hearted God! But One who goes about His business and His glorious work unreservedly and fully, for the building up and establishing of His sons and daughters in the everlasting covenant of His grace. If David could say of Jonathan: "Thy love to me is wonderful, passing the love of women," what must be love of an immutable God? Failings, frailties and falls attend the children all along the wilderness journey. Can He give them up? Can they depart from Him? Never! Absalom's rebelliousness wrought no change in the love of his father David; and can it be that David is greater than his God? Oh, no! From the sight of His eye, from the reach of his long, strong, powerful arm, from the love of His heart, an eternally-loved child can never stray.

Dear child of God, look up! Thy Father, thy Friend awaits thee in glory, and as assuredly as He is there, so thou shalt be there also. A Man, thy Brother, is on the throne, and has secured a place for thee; and if thou art blest with the faintest testimony of the Spirit, and a sight of God's Christ allures thy poor heart heavenward and homeward, and thy desire is to know more of His will, see more of His beauty, and view more of His excellencies, where He is, high in the heights of glory, thou must for ever be. Amen.

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