

Exposition of Isaiah 52: 1-8

By James Wells

Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road.

Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; j put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

See what a beautiful line there is here of Christian experience and of Gospel truth. What is it to put on our strength? To put on strength is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to have all that confidence in him which his power to save authorizes us to have, to have all that confidence in him which his acceptance with God authorizes us to have. And thus by this confidence in Christ, God is on our side, and if God be on our side, then we are relatively and eternally omnipotent. And what is it to put on the beautiful garments? The beautiful garments of holiness and of righteousness; the putting off of un-holiness, and the putting on of Christ as our sanctification, the putting off of unrighteousness, and the putting on by faith of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then comes the safety:

"For henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

Heathen nations entered from time to time into the literal Jerusalem, and ultimately destroyed it; but into the New Jerusalem, where the people are that thus believe in Christ, the enemy can never enter; there we are safe, in all other places, we are in danger of losing everything we have, even our very life; but here, in this new Jerusalem, we are not in danger of losing anything, either our name, our life, our privileges, our property, or anything else, all is safe there. Then, after putting on this strength, and these beautiful garments, and being brought into this state of safety, then comes a change of position:

"Shake thyself from the dust, arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem."

Arise from earth, and sit down in places that are heavenly; arise from the law, and sit down upon the premises of the Gospel; arise from creature things, and sit down at the Savior's feet, and listen to the eternal realities of the mercy of God. And then comes the liberty:

*' Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck."

And Jesus Christ is our liberty; it is by him we are free from all heaven's threatening's, it is by him we are free in every respect in which he himself is free. And then comes the redemption:

"Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money."

Here is the eternal redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ Then comes Divine interposition:

"He shall not fail or be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which comes out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people that are upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."

If we are brought down into Egypt, for what is this world but a kind of Egypt, a scene of bandage, of affliction, and of tribulation, where the people of God are oppressed? Now here, in contrast to this, the Lord says that his people shall know his name, "Therefore my people shall know my name;" that is, they shall know that name recorded in the 3rd of Exodus; "I am that I am;" they shall know that name that is recorded in the 34th of Exodus; "The Lord God, merciful and gracious;" and they shall know my name as recorded in the 1st of Matthew: "His name shall be called Jesus, and his name shall be called Emmanuel." Now my people shall know this. And "they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak, behold, it is I;" that is they shall know God's truth. "They shall know that I am he that doth speak;" that I speak of love eternal, that I speak of election sovereign, that I speak of eternal salvation certain. "Behold, it is I." So the Lord puts his name before his truth, and he puts his name after his truth; the one to shew us he is the author of the Gospel, and the other to shew us that the Gospel will rest eternally upon the strength of his name. Now here are these seven things I have named to you; here is the strength, the beauty, and safety, the change of position, the liberty, the redemption, and the Lord's interposition.

Now then, if we are brought into this strength of the Gospel, we shall want something to keep us there; we shall want something to live upon when we are there. Hence the next words:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings."

So that if we are brought to receive these good tidings, we shall continue to listen to them, to live upon them, to walk by them, to rejoice in them, to esteem them better than silver and gold, and that all things we can desire are not to be compared unto these delightful, these eternal truths, that bring us into these present and eternal advantages.

"That publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good that publishes salvation that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigns! Thy Watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; far they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."

Now what watchmen are these, but the apostles; the apostles lifted up the voice of truth together, and they sang together, there was entire harmony between them; and the apostles were the watchmen that saw eye to eye, and it was in their day that the Lord brought again Zion. Zion in the first Adam went away from God; but in the apostolic age God in an especial large manner brought again Zion unto himself. And those watchmen, the apostles, saw eye to eye. They read each other's writings, and when one read the writings of the other he found nothing in those writings that he could find fault with; he found nothing that he wished to be absent, hence saith the apostle Peter, "Our beloved brother Paul in all his epistles." But how could Peter know that if he had not read them? He had therefore read them; he read the revelations that were given to his brethren. So they read the revelations made to each other, the same as Christians should do now. And they not only read the revelations made to each other, but they also read each other; the same as Christians should do now. Christians are spoken of as epistles, in which are written the vitalities of eternity; and they read each other as well as each other's revelations, and they saw eye to eye. There never will be down to the end of time another such order of men as were the apostles; there never will be while the world shall last another order of men that shall see eye to eye in that perfection

as did the apostles. They, therefore, were the watchmen that saw eye to eye; and so, though they differed in manner, they did not differ in material. Their experience in kind was the same, their testimonies in kind were the same; the source of their apostleship was the same; the theme was the same; the end and object the same. Thus then they saw eye to eye. In our day people want to persuade us that we are to have another Bible by and by; that a class of ministers is to rise by and by that shall see eye to eye, and that we are going to have I don't know what. All these are the inventions of men. And as for finding another class of ministers, there is a curse attached to those that shall add anything to that which is given. Therefore it is we have all that ever will be given; we have the Holy Spirit, we have the Holy Scriptures, we have Christ, we have God, we have in those respects all that ever will be given. All we want now is the progress of what is given; is for the Lord to attend with power that Gospel that is given; for that Gospel that is capable of converting one soul is capable of converting all, and shall convert all that the Lord hath ordained unto eternal life.

Note: Take from the Earthen Vessel 1864 Page 190ff