

JERUSALEM MY HAPPY HOME

A SERMON

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“These that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.” Zechariah 7:8

“HE,” it is written, “that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;” and one of the consequences is that wherever the Lord cannot rest they who are joined to him cannot rest. And this accounts for a great deal of experience which people of God have. We seek many false resting places, and try to make ourselves contented and comparatively happy and satisfied with many, many things with which the Holy Spirit of the Lord is not satisfied, and in which and by which the Spirit of the Lord will not rest, and where will he not rest, he will not suffer us to rest, but he will stir us up and make us restless here, and restless there, and restless everywhere; and will disquiet us in a variety of ways, in order to bring us to rest where he rests, and that that is in eternal things. It is then to this quietude that our text evidently refers; for though circumstantially (and we of course shall avail ourselves this morning of the circumstances as being put upon record for our instruction), the circumstance historically refers to the Israelites in Babylon, or rather in their deliverance from Babylon; and when they were delivered by that agency which the Lord employed, then these words of our text are used expressive of the response of the Spirit of the Lord, and expressive of this repose of the spirit of the people, that is as his Spirit was quieted they also quieted; and thus the Lord rests in Zion, for he has desired it for his habitation, and he has said, “This is my rest; here will I dwell forever;” while he himself is become the habitation, the strength, and the portion of his people, in which they shall rest. Here, and nowhere else, he is determined that his Spirit shall be quieted, that he shall obtain rest; and his people are one with him, obtain rest after the same order of things.

There are three things, if we take what is implied with what is expressed in our text. Here is, in the first place, *disquietude* implied; for if the spirit be quieted, then it implies a previous disquietude; and that shall be the first part of my discourse to describe that kind of disquietude felt by the regenerated man, and that man that is a stranger to this quietude of spirit which I have this morning to describe, that man is dead in trespasses and sins, is a stranger to his real condition, and is a stranger to God, a stranger to Christ Jesus. And then the second is that of *the repose*; “These that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.” Suffice it here just to observe that the Israelites never subdivided the cardinal points. Babylon was the northeast of Judea; but our text speaks of Babylon, as several other scriptures also speak, as being in the north;

that is, north from Judea. Strictly speaking it was not so, but what we should call northeast, but they did not subdivide the cardinal points, and therefore called it the north country; we should have called it northeast. I make this remark in order to give the explanation of the circumstances referred to in our text.

The first thing then we have to attend to would be: *The disquietude*; the second would be: *The repose*; and the third would be (though I suppose I shall not reach so far) *The agency by which that quietude was brought about*, as expressed in the preceding parts of the chapter by the four chariots, the horses, the four winds of heaven, expressive of that agency which the Lord then used in which he is still using to bring about the repose both to his own's Spirit into his own children that shall remain forever.

First, then, I notice *the disquietude*. The disquiet of the people literally originated in their being afar off from what they wish to be near to. They were in captivity, and were locally afar from the promised land, afar from the city of God, from the temple of God; all of which they include in the term "Zion." And thus, their distance from the promised land, and the city, and the temple, and consequently from that localized presence of God with which he favored them, this became unto them a matter of disquietude and lamentation. You will see here how we have real Christian experience set forth. What was the first discovery made to you, and what was the first discovery, or almost the first discovery, made to me? It was that I was afar off from God, afar from the land of the living; that I was afar off from the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; that I was afar off, and knew not how I could ever come near; that I was afar off from the temple of the Lord, from the throne of the Lord, the presence of the Lord, the mercy of the Lord, for off, having no hope, and without God in the world. And their state literally, I say sets forth very beautifully the experience of the man that is taught of God. By the rivers of Babylon, "there we sat down." Let us take these rivers of Babylon as a figure of soul trouble, connected with the circumstantial troubles. And observe here that we may take Babylon as a kind of figure of the world; and when the soul is regenerated by the Spirit of God, it ceases then to be one with the world. "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down;" there we were in captivity, out of that captivity we could not get; there we were in trouble, out of that trouble we could not get; there we were afar off, out of that distance we could not get. Now, my hearer, let me stay here for a moment. What did you and I know in our own souls in the sight of a heart-searching God of being brought into soul trouble, and feeling our need of the interposition of Jesus Christ to turn that captivity of sin under which we are by nature? What did we know of being afar off from God, utterly unable to read our title clear to the mansions in the skies; utterly unable to draw near; we feel fixed there, our sin remains, our darkness remains, our bondage remains, are distance from God remains. What do we know of this in our own souls? We live in a day when there is a vast amount of noisy profession; but the Lord looks on the heart; and if we are strangers to the soul trouble, I am sure we are strangers to ourselves, and are not at all yet in the path that shall lead to the saving knowledge of the Lord. But then these people had an intense sympathy with Zion; nothing they could think of was such feeling, and sympathy, and concern, as Zion. Zion, what was Zion? Why it is an establishment of the dear Redeemers kingdom; in other words, it is the kingdom of Jesus Christ and movably established; "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, that cannot be removed but abides forever;" and "as the mountains around about Jerusalem, so the Lord is roundabout his people forever." Here is a Zion then, beautiful for situation; here is a Zion where the Lord has commanded his blessing even for evermore; here is a Zion, the kingdom and movably found it. "He wept when we

remembered Zion;" when we thought of Zion. What, again, is Zion? Zion is that place which the eternal God above all other places has chosen as he has chosen no other place: he has chosen it as his habitation and as his rest. Zion, he has said of her, "I will satisfy her poor with bread; I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy; there I will make the horn of David to bud;" namely, there will I make the power of Christ to flourish and to prosper; "for there shall the word go out that shall not return unto me void, neither shall it fall to the ground; but it shall prosper in that which I send it, and shall accomplish that which I please." This is Zion. "We hung our harps upon the willows and wept when we remembered Zion." Ah, if you make this to do about Zion you will be taunted, you will be laughed at, as you were and as I was when we were first brought into soul trouble, and first began to think of Jesus Christ; the ungodly sneered at us, and laughed at us, mocked us, and said all they could in order to annoy us, and if possible make us forget our souls, and forget that we were sinners, and forget God's mercy; but all that they did rather deepened our feelings towards God than otherwise. And so, "they that carried us away, captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth;" now then, if you are one of the elect, if you are the people of God, if you are such favorites of heaven, and you make such to do of the Zion, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." No; we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land; we are not in a singing mood; this is our sighing time, not our singing time; this is our mourning time, not our mirthful time; this is our time of sackcloth and ashes, not our time of festivity: this is our time of casting down, not of lifting up; this is our time of silence, not of speaking; this is our time of bondage, and not of freedom. Here then is that experience that distinguishes the real child of God from all others, this soul trouble this being so far off from Zion. And then look at the feelings towards Zion: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem," another term, but means the same thing, the kingdom of Christ, or the city of God; "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." Ah, Jerusalem has foundations; Jerusalem is that in which the Lord delights, the new, not the old, but the New Jerusalem, in which there is to be fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. No; the soul cannot forget it. How expressive it is of the depth of the work of the Blessed Spirit. All this disquietude is nothing else but the disquietude of the Spirit of God. God himself is not quiet, he is not at rest; and therefore he makes you in a sense like himself; for I am sure those of you that are taught of God, can respond to the Lord's own words, and if you cannot respond to them, then I think you have reason to fear that your religion is a thing of nothing, the words to which I refer are these: "For Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, and for Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness." A convinced sinner under condemnation has nothing but blackness, but when Christ justifying righteousness is brought in, and Christ appears the end of the law, and the love of God shed abroad in your heart, and pardoning mercy flows in like a river unto the soul, then you become justified by faith, and have peace with God. Are you seeking this? If you are not, if anything else can brighten up your prospect, if anything else can overcome your darkness but the brightness of Christ's righteousness, then in your faith you stop short of God's religion, and if you stop short of God's righteousness let me tell you, you stop short of everything; for be whatever you may, if you have not the righteousness of Jesus Christ, you will be like the man, however well dressed, and I dear to say he was very well dressed in his own eyes, and perhaps in the eyes of others; but still it was not royal array, it was not the robe the king had provided, it was not the wedding garment, therefore he must be cast out. "In the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns;" light again, you see. And so, if you are born of God you can respond to this, and you will say, Lord, I cannot cease to pray until you, Lord, reveal to me the righteousness of your dear Son, and bring me into peace with yourself; for I know in that way only you are a God of peace. Lord, I cannot be silent, I cannot cease to pray, I cannot

rest, I cannot be contented, until your salvation appears as a lamp that burns, to shine all my darkness away. And then I think that salvation there as a lamp that burns, means something inextinguishable; that it is a lamp that burns not to be extinguished. All other lamps are to be quenched; the lamp of human life, that burns but dimly at the best, is to be quenched; the lamp of all human hope is to be quenched; lamp of the hypocrite shall be put out, but if God's free grace, God's inextinguishable, God's eternal salvation become light, then there is a lamp that will never be extinguished; I consequently have a light here that will never be quenched, a light that never can be extinguished. Here my sympathies entwined with this order of mercy; and I say, "If I forget you O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

There is another thing well worth observing, that the ancients were wont to swear by a variety of things, but when a man was so poor as to have nothing, he would then swear by that that seemed the most useful to him. "That my right hand forget her cunning." The word *cunning* there is an old English word, meaning *skill*; there is no difficulty about the meaning of it, it simply means skill. Here I am with the right hand; and if I forget Jerusalem, then let me forget how to get my bread; Lord, that this right arm, with which I attend to my daily calling, and with which I attend to that by which I obtain the bread that perishes, rather than I should forget Jerusalem, let my right arm be paralyzed, that my right hand forget her cunning, that me forget how to use it. Lord, let any calamity overtake me, but do not let me be an apostate, do not let me deceive my soul, do not let me wonder down to hell, and think I am going to heaven, Lord did not deceive me, but undeceive me where I am deceived; let anything occur rather than that I should forget Jerusalem. See the intensity of feeling, see that disquietude; most professors in our day, and some of the real people of God, are two quiet by half, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." When I look at the love of God and the salvation of God, and the kingdom of God and when I look at what hell is, and try to imagine for a moment the unutterable agony without mitigation throughout the countless ages of eternity, and yet I am that sleepy creature, I treat it as a mere hearsay thing, when I look at the agonies of Christ, and the great salvation he has wrought, and the glory he has gained, and contrast these eternal glories with the nothingness a poor human nature, and yet I am that earthly, hardhearted, impenitent, poor creature, that I seem to treat these eternal realities as though they were as nothing, and find that I am made, shall I say, of that kind of material that would send me off into the sleep of death; I am sure I have had to pray that prayer many times, "Lighten my eyes, least I sleep the sleep of death;" again, "Quicken me, O Lord, after your lovingkindness;" and again, "Be not silent unto me, least I be like unto them that go down into the pit." Here is disquietude then. Now men that are disquieted for this life are disquieted in vain; but the man that is disquieted for eternal things is not disquieted in vain; the man that is making up his all in earthly achievements walks in the vain show; but the man that appears in filthy garments standing before the angel of the Lord is not walking in vain show: and I am sure when the Lord commands a change of raiment, and the soul brought into a knowledge of pardoning mercy, that that man walks the golden streets by faith, even while he is in this world, arrayed in garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness, crowned with the lovingkindness of the living God, and shod with the gospel preparation, that man is not walking in vain show; he is walking in that divine array, and that divine realization of eternal mercy by which he rejoices that the Lord ever disquieted him, and stirred him up, and stirred him up from time to time, so as not to let him settle in his apathy, or deceive his soul. But this depth of feeling towards Jerusalem; "If I remember not Jerusalem, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Rather than cease to pray I would cease to be able to speak; rather than be swerved from hope in God's mercy I would lose the power of speech and

become dumb, my tongue should cleave to the roof of my mouth. Here is earnestness, how far are we partakers of the spirit of earnestness? Your humble servant is perfectly conscious of his dreadful deficiency in this matter: he hopes he is not altogether destitute of that spirit of earnestness; but he feels he is very deficient in it; and it is only now and then that he makes an approach in his feeling to the possession of it. Well, even that is better than nothing. But we know among men if we see one very earnest in his affections, and the other not, there is a great want of correspondence; and I am sure our God is earnest in his love; and when there is a want of that on our part, there is a great want of correspondence, and there is a rod somewhere, there is some brine somewhere, there is some water somewhere, there are some fiery trials somewhere, there is a furnace somewhere that shall burn us out of this, and bring us to be more earnest with him who is infinitely and eternally earnest with us. I am not finding fault with *you*, I have quite enough to do with finding fault with myself.

But again, "If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Is there anything extravagant in this? If we should be tempted to think there is, we should have nothing to do but go to the latter part of the book of Revelation, and there read out a description of Jerusalem, where there is no sorrow, no death, no pain; where God wipes away all tears from off all faces, where they have no temple, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb or the temple thereof: where they need not the produce even of creative all my pertinence, but God himself and the Lamb are the light thereof; he is the tree of life, and his mercy that river of water of life clear as crystal, flowing from the mediatorial throne, while the people there see his face, and shall reign for ever and ever; neither can they die anymore, being the children of the Resurrection, in preferring Jerusalem above our chief joy. Is there anything extravagant? No, there is not. Thus, then, if we are Christians, we know something of this disquietude, something of this intent sympathy towards Christ, towards his kingdom, towards Mount Zion, towards the new Jerusalem. But do you say, Ah, I do you not know, I do not mind about it. Well, I must say, as I have said before, there is no middle path; we must be either friends or enemies. In the same hundred and 37th Psalm to which I have referred, that records and describes the feelings of the real Christian sets forth at that time the judgments on the opposite character. "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof." Ah, how many are there now, that would raise the free grace gospel of God, raze it even to the foundation; yes, they would do away with this truth, and with that truth, and the other truth. I must tell you once more what I have told you lately before, that doctrine is nothing else but a description of the character of God; and if you take away any one of the truths of the gospel you misrepresent the character of your Maker; and all of the characters he bears, there is none so dear to him as his saving character there are all the light centers; his covenant character, wherein he appears in a sworn covenant; and if what I am now saying be true, what will be the end of those men who live and die in the garb of piety, under the influence of zeal from some quarter which I will not now mention; but their whole system is nothing else but a misrepresentation of the new covenant, a misrepresentation of the character of the great God. "O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed;" and we must belong to Zion mystically, or to Babylon mystically; "happy shall he be that rewards you as you have served us. Happy shall he be that takes and dashes your little ones against the stands." These are the judgments that await the enemies. And thus then, the Lord's spirit was disquieted, and his people were disquieted. The inhabitants of Babylon had disquieted his people, and that disquieted him, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and what is done unto them is done unto him; "He that touches you," says God, "touches the apple of his eye." But if you know the truth, you will advocate it fast enough; if you

know the truth you will stand out for it fast enough; if you know the truth rightly, really, you shall never give away an inch to that which is contrary to it.

But after these few remarks, now, leaving you to judge what you know of being disquieted in the way I have described, second, what you know of these strong feelings towards Christ, towards Zion, towards his kingdom, what you know of feeling that you would rather lose your life, grace enabling you, then you would apostatizing from these truths, that you cannot forget Jerusalem; the people who were the people of God after the flesh, they forgot it, they went away from it; and so the Lord forgot them, departed from them, left them to their ruin; there they are, scattered to this day, to be gathered no more forever. But how did the Lord's spirit become quieted? Why, by deliverance: by that which will quiet your spirit. The people in their captivity are like bones at the graves mouth, scattered about, the Holy Spirit comes, organizes them, unites them, and unites them to what? I know what he unites them to, and that shall be my first step in describing this quietude or rest. These scattered bones stood up an exceeding great army; it is a military idea. And why are they represented as standing as an army? Because they were united to the victory that God had wrought, or to speak in this more gospel form they were united to what is declared in the 40th of Isaiah; "The warfare is accomplished;" that is, "the iniquity is pardoned," by my covenant head I have received double, grace now, glory hereafter, there it is, there I can stand, now I have the victory, knowing the victory is obtained, and pardon past, present, and to come; grace now, and grace here after; now I am quiet. Nothing short of this will give us quiet. Bless the Lord, I have been resting there more or less for many years, I feel it is sweet resting place. Oh, this dear, this precious Jesus Christ, the victory is complete, their God's spirit rests, their Jesus rests. Jesus himself would not have rested if his victory had not been complete, "his own holy arm," he obtained the victory holily, righteously, entirely, finally, "his own holy arm has gotten him the victory." Precious faith laying hold of this, I have nothing to do now but here to stand, and here to eat, and here to drink, and here to live, and here to be held up, and here to die, and here to rise, and here to rejoice, clothed in a white robe, a palm in my hand, and join with a loud voice of "Salvation unto him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever." That quiets the spirit. I am not now noticing the imagery in the preceding part of the chapter, for I find I shall not be able to bring in all these chariots and horses, which I must at another time have a word upon, because they are very instructive, and very interesting, and I think very delightful. Then the second step in repose is that of transplantation from the congregation of the dead, to the land of the living: I am still referring to the 37th of Ezekiel, "I will open your graves, and bring you up out of your graves; and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and brought you up out of your graves, and brought you into the land of Israel." Here is a transplantation from the congregation of the dead, into the land of the living. Just so now, the man that is brought to stand on this vantage ground, he is no longer at home in the congregation of the dead. And although sometimes your worldly circumstances may be like graves, the circumstance shall occur, and shall kill you to everything spiritual, not vitally so but as far as your feelings are concerned; down you go, and you are like a man dead and buried. Well brother, how are you getting on? Getting on? Say you, I am dead and buried. You are? Well, dead people cannot talk. Well, I can talk in that respect, but I am dead and buried. By-and-by the Lord opens this grave, cannot open it yourself, brings you up out of the grave, brings you into the land of Israel, and enables you to range over the land, and see the difference between the congregation of the dead, and the land of the living, the difference between the floating clouds of time, and the fixed glories of eternity; see the mighty difference, the clouds are always shifting, and therefore no fixedness as to their locality, their

shape, their form, their color, but sun, moon, and stars move with unalterable regularity; and so do the counsels and promises of our God, the promises of our God go shining on with immovable regularity. When you can get away from the fleeting scenes of time, and the congregation of the dead, and are brought into this land of the living, ah, say you, now I am comfortable, now I have got hold of something that will not pass away. It is a poor thing, to build your hope upon anything that will pass away; the Lord intends the hope of his people, and the affections of his people to rest upon that that will not pass away, his promises will not pass away, his name will not pass away, his goodness, his mercy, and his favor will all not pass away; there you will be quiet. There is, and with that I must close this part, after just reminding you of something else: here is in that same chapter a fourfold representation of eternity, and wherein we have a peaceable habitation, wherein we have sure dwellings, and where we have quiet resting places. The Lord fulfill his promise in the 30th of Jeremiah to Jacob, that Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and shall be quiet. We have then in the 37th of Ezekiel a fourfold representation of eternity. The first is by the incorruptible inheritance, they shall inherit the land forever. Does not that endear eternity? You have no lot here, no portion here, you can inherit forever, and the best portion you have here, has many drawbacks in it, but it is not so here. Hear the description of it; “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away.” That is one representation. Ah, who shall find language to describe the difference between that and the portion that lies below that; the one that enters into this inheritance, and was comforted on every side, and the one that went below that, and lifted up his eyes, and longed even for a drop of water. See then by Jesus Christ, the inheritance we come into. God grant us grace to be content with our lot here, reconcile us to it, and charm us more with that eternal inheritance we have in Jesus. That is the joy set before him, he was reconciled to sorrows you and I never felt; he was reconciled to sufferings we never did, nor can undergo he was willing to be made a curse here, that he might be a blessing here after, he was willing to be made sin here, that he might be salvation here after; he was willing to be filled with sorrow here, that he might be filled and fill us with joy here after, he was willing to die here, that he might live here after, he was willing to undergo anything and everything here, that he might possess everything and bring his brethren and to possess everything hereafter. Oh, how rightly did Jesus’ estimate things; he put a light value upon that which was light and attached an infinite importance to that which was infinitely important. He knew where in lay the weighty matters of faith, judgment, and mercy. Thanks to God for such a representative as this. Inheritance, then, they shall inherit the land forever, there that Spirit is quiet, there the soul rests. The second representation of eternity is the continuation of Christ in that land in his princely character, and that princely character in this eternal inheritance unites to relations, servitude, and endearment. “My servant David,” or as it might be rendered, “my beloved servant,” “shall be their prince forever.” Notice, “my servant,” so it is by servitude that he will be our Prince forever, it is by his servitude that he is loved forever by the Lord and by his people. “Therefore, does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.” We are to meet him on the ground of the service he has rendered, we are to meet him on the ground of the righteousness he has wrought, on the ground of the warfare he has accomplished, on the ground of the atonement he has made, on the ground of the victory he has obtained. What a triumphant meeting must that be, truly there the Spirit of the Lord will rest, and the people shall rest also. The third representation given of eternity there is this, “I will make a covenant of peace with them,” and least we might think it was a mere temporary covenant the Lord adds in a very emphatic way, “it shall be an everlasting covenant.” It is a covenant of peace, why then is it everlasting peace, no war can ever arise. A quarrel arose between God and man in the first Adam; but that is settled in the Second Adam never to rise again. He has entered into a

covenant, and engaged to make peace, he has made peace and he brings us into that peace, and in that peace, we are to dwell forever. Then the fourth representation given of eternity, where we have quietness, is the Lord's presence. First there is the land, then there is the Prince of life, and peace, and glory, and then there is the covenant to make it safe, and then there is the Lord's presence to make it happy. "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." Now the word "sanctuary" signifies "holy;" that the Lord shall dwell there without sin. Jesus Christ dwelt with us once with sin, and bore our sin upon him, but he shall appear the second time without sin; because he got rid of that sin, he has put sin away, he shall appear without sin, and his people, washed in atoning blood, conformed to the blessed Redeemer, shall dwell here for evermore. Here then is the rest of the Lord's presence.

Now I must say a word or two more, I could say a great deal more upon this, but I just in conclusion give one hint, and that is this; how came the Jews to return from captivity at all? Had they behaved so well during those 70 years that when the time arrived, they were entitled on the ground of their good behavior to return? Do you say this? If you do, you will run counter to God's own testimony, who has said, "not for your sakes, but for my name's sake I do this." But even that does not make the secret very obvious; the secret of it all is this, and a beautiful secret it is. Before the Israelites went into captivity the Holy Ghost placed the birth of the Savior at Bethlehem in Judea, and Christ must be there, for "the scepter shall not depart;" the princely scepter remained in the tribe of Judah all the time of the captivity; "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." The secret of the return was that Christ still forms a part of the genealogy of that tribe; that tribe could not be broken all the time Christ was there, he was to be born in Bethlehem, was to be called the Nazarene, was to accomplish our salvation at Jerusalem; there the gospel was to begin to be preached. So that Christ after all was at the root of their return. Bless his holy name, I had almost said he is at the root of everything that is vitally good. So, the secret of their return laid then in the fact that Jesus Christ was not yet born, that prediction gave him descent or rather gave him birth from that tribe, and gave him birth in Judea, where he was to live and where he was to die, the apostles to be called, and the gospel preaching to commence.