

THE CHARIOTS OF SALVATION

A SERMON

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“So they walked to and fro through the earth.” Zechariah 6:7

THERE are at the beginning of this chapter four chariots spoken of, coming from between two mountains of brass; and if these four chariots be taken nationally, as some have taken them in that sense, then they may be made to represent the four great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome and applying the words after this manner, learned men have said many and instructive things upon these four chariots, and not inconsistent either with truth. Then if the four chariots be taken ecclesiastically, as expressive of adverse powers, powers that are adverse to God and to his truth, then it will mean all the ecclesiastical powers that ever have risen, or ever will rise, in the four quarters of the globe against the gospel of God, against the suretyship responsibility of Christ, and against that order of things by which alone we can be saved. Some have taken this view of the four chariots and horses, and have said also many instructive things, not at all perhaps inconsistent with truth. But it is not my intention this morning, though I shall have to deal this morning with the chariots and with the horses, which are called in this same chapter the four spirits of the heavens, my object will be to take them spiritually; for while I am not exactly prepared to deny that they may with some degree of consistency be applied nationally, and also ecclesiastically, I am, nevertheless, more inclined to think that their meaning is altogether spiritual; and taking them spiritually there will be nothing, I think, as we go along either difficult to understand or unprofitable to attend to. I am fully aware there is a tendency about us to pass over such scriptures, and to think they can yield us nothing; but let us not forget the testimony of the Lord himself by his servant Paul, that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.”

Now I have taken the words as a text, but it is what the words imply, rather than what they express, that will form the substance of our discourse this morning; I shall therefore make but very few remarks upon the text itself, shall just make a few remarks upon it when we come to the close of our discourse. So in handling the subject that is before us I shall notice, first, *The Chariots*; secondly, *The Horses*; thirdly, *The Four Winds*; and then, fourthly, *The Mission* included in our text, that “they walked to and fro through the earth.” This is nothing else, mystically, but the mission given to the twelve apostles, the mission given to all the ministers of God, to walk to and fro through the earth, and to find out poor sinners, and, instrumentally, turn their captivity, and

bring them with singing unto Zion, that everlasting joy may be upon their heads, and that sorrow and sighing may flee away.

I notice, then, first, these MYSTIC CHARIOTS; and we shall take the word of God as our guide. I shall take a twofold view of the chariots; first, that the appearance of these chariots is a *declaration of war*; secondly, that there being four chariots is to denote that the Lord compasses his people about for their protection on all sides. First that the appearance of these chariots is a declaration of war. Hence the 21st of Isaiah, we find there the watchman set to watch; and he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen; and the appearance of this chariot is a declaration of war; and so the watchman gave notice of this declaration of war; and this declaration of war stirred up some inquiries, and they said, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" The watchman said, "The morning comes, and also the night; if you will enquire, enquire you; return, come." And I need scarcely remind you here that ministers are spoken of as the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof; "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." So that here is first a declaration of war. And this is what a sinner is brought to apprehend. Ah, he says, I did not see before the kind of war that stands against me; I see now what a war stands against me; I see that sin stands against me, I see that in a way I never did before; I see that the war chariots of Sinai stand against me; not that I shall take these as law chariots, but gospel chariots: I think I shall prove that presently pretty clearly. But such an one will say, I see now what there is stands against me. Now there is the question to the watchman, "Watchman, what of the night?" "And the watchman said, The morning comes:" and what is that morning? You know what that morning is; sin is our night, salvation is our morning; guilt is our night, pardoning mercy is our morning; degradation is our night, sanctification by the blood of Jesus is our morning; condemnation is our night, and an awful night it is, justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ is our morning; hell is a place that has no day, heaven is a place that has no night; there is therefore the contrast, in the one eternal night, in the other it is eternal day. "The morning comes." Ah then, says the poor sinner, if Jesus Christ be the morning, if he be the Morning Star, if he be the rising Sun, if he be the way in which I am to come out of this night, this woeful night, this dark night, this tempestuous night, this miserable night, this eternal night, this outer darkness, this fearful darkness, this darkness that may be felt; such an one will enquire fast enough; "If you will enquire, return you, come; the morning comes, and also the night;" But to whom shall the morning come, or with whom shall it be the morning? Why, the man that feels his need of Christ; and the man that is brought to see that Jesus Christ is the end of sin and the end of the law for righteousness, has swallowed up death in victory. If I am brought to see this, then these chariots come forth in my favor. Hence, then, to make this matter clear, taking it in the gospel sense, taking these words as a key that I have just now quoted, the words of Elisha to Elijah, "The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof;" a figure, you see, to represent the strength and usefulness of the prophet. Let us apply this to several persons and see how nicely it answers. Let us apply it to Moses; Moses comes rushing into Egypt as the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; he comes by Divine power rushing into Egypt, as the chariot of God's salvation; God, it is said, in another place, makes the clouds his chariot; he can make anything his chariot; and so he made Moses his chariot of salvation; and Moses came rushing into Egypt by Divine power, and burst the bonds of the people in sunder, brought them under the shelter of the Paschal Lamb, brought them into freedom, and they saw their enemies all destroyed; and I am sure they might here say to Moses, he is in God's hand the chariot of salvation and the horsemen thereof; for with what mighty powers is that man armed, that he should come in like a chariot, and thus overturn all Egypt: and now we stand and see not only our bondage gone, but the very persons

that held us In bondage destroyed. So, poor sinner, not only is your captivity gone, but those sins that brought you into bondage and held you in bondage are cast into the depths of the sea, they are sunk as lead in the mighty waters, to rise no more forever and now salvation will become your theme, and you will walk to and fro through the earth.

Take the word “earth” in our text to mean the promised land, and you are brought out of bondage into the promised land, you will do spiritually as your spiritual father was commanded to do literally, I mean Abraham; in the 13th chapter of Genesis the Lord said to Abraham, “Arise, walk, through the land in the length of it; and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto you;” and this has a mystic meanings and now you are to walk through the land in the length of it, you are to go up to God’s foreknowledge, range over his predestinating you to be conformed to the image of his dear Son; and walk through the sweet valley of the Divine calling, and then rise to the mountain of justification; and take your standing upon mount justification, then look forward with sweet assurance to mount glorification. And then you may take the breadth of the land; that the Savior’s mediatorial work measures the breadth of the land, that his atonement carries away captivity, as Mister Osborne used to say, that his atonement is broad enough to cover all your sins that his righteousness is wide enough to cover you, that his mercy is wide enough to sustain you, and his grace wide enough to supply you. So if you walk through the length of the land, you will find eternity in it; if you walk through the breadth of it; you will find amplitude in it, and thus you will rejoice that the Lord has made the ministry of the word to you as a chariot of salvation; to bring you out of your captivity, and bring you into the sweet freedom of the everlasting gospel of God. “The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,” That is what Elisha said of Elijah, How differently that sounds from what the world says of us, Oh, he is only a poor parson, that, is what they say. But when we come to the Bible, there we are treated respectfully, and we all like to be where we are treated respectfully and kindly, and therefore I think the more we stay in the Bible, the better. We are treated kindly there, thought something of there: we get something there, are at home there, happy there, our Elder Brother is there, our Father is there, the Spirit of all grace is there, the water of life is there, everything is there, and the more we stay in the Bible, the better. Again, apply the idea of chariot to Joshua, “the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” Ah, he rolled in like an avalanche upon the seven nations of Canaan, everything gave way before him, and Israel took possession of the land. And so after you have gone out of captivity, you will find great opposition to your getting in possession of the land; all sorts of excuses, whatever you do, say they; do not become one of those high doctrine men, do not become one of those election men, do not become one of those; whatever you do, do not go too far. Well, says such an one, I do not know, I read, and in reading the Bible I hear a person saying, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, well then, first here is a sovereignty; has given *you* the land;” then if I get the land it must be because the Lord is pleased to give it to me. And second, here is certainty; he has *given* the land; that is very high: and then third, here is evidently immutability; cannot be undone, he *has* given; it is done: “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you, the kingdom.” And thus, then if the holy prophets are made chariots of salvation unto us, it brings us out of Egypt, out of Egyptian bondage, brings us into liberty, and brings us into possession of the promised land. So, the idea would apply to David; he was a kind of chariot; the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, see what the Lord enabled that man to do; there is the great secret of all success, the Lord being with us. Without him, we are compared to a worm, “Fear not, you worm Jacob.” And does the Christian feel insulted by being nominated in that humble way? No; the Christian says, Truth, Lord; I am humble as a worm, I am worthless as a worm, I am despicable as a worm in and of

myself. Ah, but this same Jacob who, in himself, is thus a poor, humble, worthless thing, is a man in Christ; “you men of Israel.” So, they are men in Christ, here then, the Lord being with them enables them to level mountainous impediments, and to overcome whatever may stand in the way. Ah, how sweet it is to feel that the Lord is with us, to feel that our hearts are with him, and that he is with us. Then, of course, these words would apply, or this idea, to the Lord Jesus Christ in the most emphatic sense, the chariot of Israel; the others were only so ministerially, but Christ was the chariot of salvation essentially. Ah, when he came against sin how completely did he conquer it; how he drove his chariot wheels over this leviathan, over this serpent, how he crushed this monster, how he trod it down as mire of the streets, how he came against Satan, how he led captivity captive, and dragged the devil captive at his chariot wheels, that the devil was obliged to be conquered, whether he would or not. The devil made himself very busy, he made several approaches to Jesus Christ, and perhaps he wished afterwards that he had made it his policy to let him alone, but he could not let Christ alone, and so Christ would not let him alone, but wounded the dragon, shut him up in the bottomless pit as to his power over the church, for he never has had from that day to this, and never will have, down to the end of time, power to lay one fault to the Church of the living God. Truly, then, Jesus Christ was the chariot of Israel, was the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, the chariot of eternal salvation. And this would apply, of course, to the apostles as well, but I must say no more upon this.

Again, four chariots mean that the people of God are compassed on every side, all four points of the compass. And Zechariah seems to delight in this idea; I like it very much, because it presents this to me, that literal Jerusalem had a weak side, and the weak side of Jerusalem literally was the northern side: and it was on the northern side of Jerusalem that all the ancient warriors took care to set their armies and commence their wars, because that was a weak side, and there they often succeeded. But here in the antitypical Jerusalem, in salvation matters, there is no weak side, one side is as strong as the other. Now I say then, the prophet Zechariah glories in this idea, this universality of protection; and the four chariots are the third idea of the same kind that this prophet advances. In his first chapter he gives us the same idea in one form; in his second chapter he gives us the same idea of being thus compassed about in another form; and then in this sixth chapter he again gives us two more ideas, not only the four chariots, but another as well: the fourth idea the same thing in another form. Now in his first chapter, as you are aware, there are the four horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem; to denote that when God was against them, they were exposed on all sides. Ah, my hearers, those of you that know not the Lord, little do you think what an awful state you are standing in; you are exposed on all sides; you have no protection on the right hand nor on the left; you have no protection against your past sins overtaking and damning you, condemning you, and destroying you; and you have no protection for the future, you stand exposed on all sides, and you are content so to stand, so to live. Ah, if your eyes were opened, and you could see your exposed condition, oh how gladly would you look about for a refuge, would you not say with the poet,

Ah, whither shall I flee,
To hide myself from wrath and you?

So, without God, we are exposed on all sides; and so blind are we that we defy Omnipotence; we rush in upon the thick bosses of his bucklers. Such is the depravity of human nature. I would make an appeal to you to alter your condition, but if I were to do so I should be mocking you. I should

be belying your condition, should be belying the Word of God, and, I should be taking the work out of his hands; I should be casting Christ down from his excellency, and suggesting that you have power, to alter your condition. I tell you of your state, praying the Lord to convince you of the truth of what I say, to waken you up, and lead you to seek refuge in that Rock of Ages, Christ Jesus, the only place where a poor sinner can be sheltered from the wrath to come. Now there were four carpenters sent and these four carpenters, or builders, were to cast out the horns of the Gentiles. Here are four builders. As to men trying to explain who the persons literally were, appears to me to be just absurd. I do, not think, it means four men at all literally: we must, take it mystically, to denote that the Lord compasses his people on all sides. Here are four builders, called carpenters; the learned say that translation is too close, and it might have been builders; and they denote that there is a wall of salvation on each side: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." And ministers who are sent to build up the people of God, or the city of God, will proclaim a salvation that is strong on all sides; that has a free grace wall, all round these are the true builders. A great many try to pull down this wall, but those who are sent of God will ministerially build up the walls of Jerusalem, and they will say to enquirers, Go round Zion, consider her palaces, mark you well her bulwarks, look at her walls of salvation, see if they are impregnable, whether you can trust yourselves inside it; then listen to the people's song who are inside, that "This God is our God for ever and forever, and will be our guide even unto death." Ah then, the Lord compasses us on all sides; with us every way. Then in the second chapter the prophet gives us the same idea in another form. "I" said the Lord, "will be unto her a wall of fire;" there is his judgment to those that would injure his children; there is his fiery indignation against those that would touch those that are his; "he that touches you touches the apple of his eye." I will be unto her a wall of fire around about and will be the glory in the midst of her." Ah, Christian, has the gospel been made a chariot of salvation unto you, brought you somewhat into that promised land, and do you see how the Lord by his gospel compasses you with salvation, and compasses you with threatening's against your enemies? Ah, we cannot make too much of such a God as this. Oh, how sweet it is when we are under some trouble if the Lord gives us a word that he is with us, and will take care of us; we can then smile at all that may seem to threaten our very ruin. Then you see here, again, chariots. First there is the architectural idea, building: secondly there is the judicial idea, wall of fire; and then comes the royal idea, chariots, these chariots watching around about, four chariots, compassed on all sides, to show that the Lord is active and takes care of his people.

Second: Now after making these remarks upon the chariots, taking them thus spiritually, I now go to the HORSES. And I consider that Elijah being called the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, authorizes a spiritual view of these chariots, and that is, my key, now I come to the horses. I go to the tenth chapter of this same book of Zechariah in order to authorize a spiritual view of the horses; and there it is said, "The Lord has visited his flock the house of Judah, and has made them as his goodly horse in the battle." And then this same tenth chapter, after describing what the visitations of the Lord does, goes on to describe the victories wrought by this mystic people. Is it not so? In the absence of the Lord are we not like the timid sheep, like the wandering sheep? Have you never to pour out that lamentation? I know I have, not as to my sentiments: no, bless the Lord, I am not prone to wander in that sense, but as to my feelings,

"Prone to wander."

But when he visits us it so changes the scene, makes us as the goodly horse in the battle, clothes our necks with thunder, enables us to triumph over the foe, rush through every opposition, and rejoice that he gives to the horse's strength. Now the very colors of these horses indicate Christian experience. There are four colors, or rather there are three, and then a mixture, and if I were to apply each color to one Christian, I venture to say there is not a Christian man or woman here this morning that would not recognize his or her experience in what I say. Now the red horse denotes fiery conflict. When a sinner is awakened to a knowledge of what he is, he sees that sin has deceived him, that Satan, and the world, and the flesh have deceived him. Ah, what fiery conflicts here to get away from God's law, to get away from hell. Why, that man is one of the best hearers a minister can have. Ah, when a man comes to the house of God who has a fiery conflict, he says, Ah, what will become of me? I seem red as it were with conflict; fire seems to burn, and I do not know what will become of me. The man is so feverish, does not know what to do. What will become of me? What will become of you? why, you will get to heaven, my hearer: for if the Lord intended to destroy you he never would have brought you into this fiery conflict, he never would have thus made you sigh after mercy. All this shall end as I will presently describe. Well, but then the horse conveys the idea of strength. Ah, so is the man brought into soul conflict strong; destroy that man's convictions if you can, he is strong in them. Not all the men on earth, not all the silver and gold and false gospels put together can bribe that man into peace; he feels what he is as a sinner, and out of that you cannot persuade him. False convictions can be hushed into tranquility by a false gospel; false conflicts may be ended by false means and by delusions, but where the conviction is real, such on one will remain in all the strength of that conviction until God shall bring salvation unto him.

And then the second is a black horse. What is that? Why, mourning. So such an one becomes a mourner. Ah, he says, I am afraid my conflict is going off; I seem now worn out with conflict; and I am become a poor, mopish, mourning creature. If I read the threatening's of the Bible, they make me mourn; and if I read the promises they make me mourn, because I cannot get at them; and if I see those I believe to be the Lord's people miserable, I think my mourning is not real; and if I see them happy, I seem to envy them, and think they are what I shall never be; and if I hear a sermon, and see it is a good one, yet I cannot get at it. And then after this conflict and mourning, then come the white horses, and these while that have gone after the black have quieted my spirit. And so the bright tidings of the gospel, the white denotes purity, perfection, victory, and freedom, and all the good things you can think of, as set forth in the 10th of Revelation, where Jesus is seen in his conquest, in contrast to his humiliation and his conflict. In the 1st of Zechariah, Jesus Christ is riding on a red horse, to denote the fiery conflict of his life and of his death, and behind him were red horses, those that are sharing in the conflict, There is Christ in his conflict among the myrtle trees that are in the bottom, his people that are in, the valley of this world; "I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, they are in the valley. There he was on a red horse, in his conflictive character, till he had gained the victory. But in the 19th of Revelation, when he appears on the vantage ground of conquest, there he appears on a white horse, to denote the purity of state at which he has arrived, and brought his people into: to denote the perfection that he has brought in for them: to denote the victory and the freedom that he has wrought for them. And to show they shall be one with him in this, the armies that were in heaven, followed him upon white horses, meaning that they followed him in purity, in perfection, in victory, in strength, in triumph, in exaltation. Can you understand it? Some say, I wish you would not preach from such difficult subjects as this. Why not? I have said nothing this morning that is not as plain as A B C. Well, it

rather puzzles me. Why, look at your pen stuck in your ear, and your head on your hand, and your eyes, on your ledger, and you are puzzled for five hours to make your halfpence, and farthings, right, and yet if you cannot directly understand these eternal things, you say you are puzzled. Why, the more you have your senses exercised, to understand these heavenly figures, these heavenly hieroglyphics, these heavenly metaphors, the more precious they will be to you when you do understand them. The white then came after the black, after the red and the black. So if you know anything of fiery conviction, if you know anything of the mourning, by-and-bye the victory will come in, and oh, how it will change the scene: ah, you will know after what order to shout victory, it will be through the blood of the Lamb. And these white, these, victorious tidings have quieted my spirit in the north country. Then I come to the grisled and bay. How expressive is this variety of color. First the conflict, then the mourning, then the victory, then comes the checkered scene. Ah, what a checkered experience is the experience of the old Christian. The man that has known what this fiery conflict is; the man that knows what it is to go in black, to go in mourning, mourning over his own soul, and mourning after God and the man that has realized victory, that man is prepared for a checkered scene after this. Ah, you will have much to do with your own heart, your own heart after this will bubble up such evils, and it will be such a checkered scene, such a variety, neither black nor white, as it were, neither light nor dark, neither up nor down and under these circumstances you will begin to take less notice. I was going to say, of the color of things, and simply to the perfection of Christ's work and the immutability of the blessed God; and there the old Christian will rest.

Hence in this same book we have a beautiful representation of this very experience under another form; where the Lord says of Jerusalem, "There shall your old men and women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand, for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls, playing in the streets thereof." You can imagine the boys and girls playing up in the streets of Jerusalem and the old men standing up under the wall sunning themselves and looking at them. And just so now, there are the little ones, they can rejoice in the streets of Jerusalem, and wonder that old Christian is not more joyful: but if the old Christian is not so joyful, he is more steady; he stands, up under the wall of salvation, suns himself very quietly; looks at the little ones, and says, Ah, I recollect when I rejoiced like you, and when I danced like you, and when I played about Union Street, and Love Street, and Mediation Street, and Everlasting Life Street, just as you little ones do; I am now resting upon the staff of promise, standing under the wall of salvation, sunning myself very quietly, and by-and-bye I shall go home, get rid of this poor old body, and then I shall be young again, and then I shall play in the streets of Jerusalem, when I go to another world, where mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

Now I suppose I must not say much more, because my eight pages will be full: just a few words in conclusion. Well now, these four chariots are in this same chapter called four spirits, the four spirits of the heavens. There is another idea, you see, of being compassed about; "the four spirits of the heavens;" the margin reads it "the four *winds* of the heavens." Then if it means the four winds it will not mean four different winds, but it will mean one atmosphere acting in a variety of directions, called four winds, but in reality, one. So, the Holy Spirit of God is called four winds. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And why are they spoken of as four? Because the Lord has a people scattered east, west, north, and south, and the great mission is, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." So it was that they went forth by the

universality of the power of the Holy Ghost, east, west, north, and south, fulfilled the Savior's words, "They shall come from the east, from the west, and the north, and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." These four spirits of the heavens therefore mystically are nothing else but the great mission of Christ that the gospel shall be preached east, west, north, and south; and called the winds of the heavens, because it is by the Holy Spirit that life enters into the sinner, and although called four winds they are in reality but one, expressive of the universality of the Holy Spirit's power. But they are called the spirits of the *heavens*. Ah the Holy Spirit breathes heavenly life, brings us into heavenly light, and heavenly peace, and heavenly joy; heavenly climes, and heavenly freedom, and it is all heavenly together. And it is said of these mystic horses that "they sought to walk." Now just apply the words to the apostles, just read the verse, and you will see how nicely it answers to what I have said. "The bay went forth and sought to go;" and so the apostles, they sought to carry out their mission, they toiled and labored to carry out their mission: "they sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth; and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So, they walked to and fro through the earth." Is not that true of the apostles? has it not been true of ministers more or less ever since? I know I would walk to and fro through the earth a great deal more than I do, if I could; I am sure if I had ten times more strength than I have, God Almighty knows it is the highest delight of my existence to devote the whole of it to his service; but further than my strength will bear me I cannot go; I have worked hard now for thirty-four years, and I bless the Lord that he has given me strength to do so. Say some, you should preach easier. Well, I do sometimes think I will: but I forget it when I am preaching.

Now then they walked to and fro through the earth. There is no minister under the heavens, that is contented to preach the gospel merely in one place, not the man that is sent of God; no the tidings are precious, and we love to go about with them, to carry them hither and thither. And then I think this walking to and fro through the earth, will fairly mean two things, one of which I have already suggested; first, that the minister is to walk to and fro through the land, that he may know something of the length and breadth thereof, and bring a description of it to the enquirer: and then, secondly, he is to walk to and fro, and preach the gospel anywhere and everywhere, wherever the Lord is pleased to open a door for him so to do.