

TWO MOUNTAINS OF BRASS

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning June 16th, 1861

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At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road

Volume 3 Number 130

“The mountains were mountains of brass.” Zechariah 6:1

SOME have held that these two mountains are intended to represent election and reprobation, to represent these two doctrines in their eternal stability; but some object to the term *reprobation*, and prefer the term *preterition*, which in reality does not differ from the other; reprobation signifies God giving a man over on the ground of sin to eternal judgment; and preterition signifies the Lord passing by a man, and leaving him in his sins; and so, for myself, I see no very great difference between the two terms. Some then I say have thought these two mountains of brass intended to set forth mystically the great truth of eternal election and of the eternal destiny of the lost; and I have no doubt in my own mind that that is a very near approach to the truth. And others have thought that these two mountains of brass mean the Old and the New Testament dispensations; and that as the one began to vanish away and the other to be established, that the chariots and horses spoken of in the following verse express the movements of the different nations of the earth between the abolition of the one dispensation and the establishment of the other, and many very excellent things have been said upon these two mountains of brass under the view I am now taking. But the view that I feel drawn into will compel me to think that the two mountains of brass are intended to set forth the law of God and the gospel of God; stability, of course, being the primary and reigning idea: and this I think will come out in rather strong proof as we go along; and will harmonize with our discourse last Lord's day morning. I notice, then, taking our text, which of course we must do, mystically or spiritually. I notice in the first place, *Stability*; and then, secondly, *The Union of Judgment with Mercy*; third, *Conspicuousness*, how conspicuous must be two mountains from all other mountains.

First: First, that of STABILITY. Now this metal, brass, and I shall speak of it this morning from two or three scriptures before I come to the mountains, only where it, is spoken of in a gospel sense; I shall confine myself to that, to avoid rambling into other subjects. You will observe then that this phrase is made use of, under a variety of circumstances, figuratively in the Bible to set forth stability, and we get a great deal of very beautiful gospel truth under this idea. We begin with the brazen altar. You read of the brazen altar upon which the sacrifice of burnt offering was offered. Here you have the idea of stability; it was fireproof and also durable: it conveys the idea of stability, and therefore brings before us the fact of the stability of the sacrificial service of God. And what a

sweet truth is this, that the sacrificial perfection of the dear Savior, its durability, its stability, denoted, as I think it is, by the brazen altar; what a sweet truth it is that his sacrificial perfection remains. It is worthy of our notice, that if we are brought to feel our need of this, and all that are taught of God are sure to be brought to feel their need of it, and to see that the Lord set this sacrificial perfection to our account from the foundation of the world, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and through all the types and shadows of that dispensation that sacrificial perfection which in the fulness of time was to be accomplished still remained; it was never altered. When the dear Savior appeared in the world he did not appeal to God to have some of the scriptures altered, but he lived as it was written of him, and he died as it was written of him; and there is in that sacrificial perfection which he has established, eternal duration. And when you look at the blessed truth too, that here all the promises of God are indicated, that all the promises of God appear, by the altar, by the sacrifice of Christ. Hence the seraphim that is sent of God takes a live coal from the altar and touches the prophet's lips. Here, my hearer, then, is stability, eternal stability; here God the Father is the same, here Jesus Christ is the same, here the Blessed Spirit is the same, here our acceptance is the same, here our light, and life, and freedom, and all we have, are the same. Does health give way, friends give way, circumstances give way, and by-and-bye life itself give way? What of that? All these are but the mere scaffolding; that is all, they will come down by-and-bye: and then, here is sacrificial perfection long in duration as eternity itself; and we, perfect by that sacrificial perfection, shall rush into eternity in all the triumphs of the perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is therefore something sweet in the thought, I do not know anything that more cheers my heart than this, to contrast the difference; that the high priest under the Old Testament dispensation went in every year to the Holy of Holies, bringing sin into remembrance every year; but Jesus Christ offered only one offering, he died only once; and there is no more conscience of sin, there is no more remembrance of sin, there is no more offering asked for, there is no more offering needed for sin than this of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my hearer, how many there are in the world that profess the name of Jesus, if they were but convinced in their own hearts what they are in the eyes of God's law; if they were convinced of the nothingness of their own doings, and once led into the knowledge of the charms of sacrificial perfection, they would indeed see the infinite inferiority of everything when set by the side of this altar, of this heavenly service, of this burnt offering, of this sacrifice, of this eternal stability.

Then, secondly, this metal is made use of to denote not only stability of sacrificial perfection, but also stability of dwelling; combined with plenty of all good things. Hence in the 8th of Deuteronomy, of the promised land Moses says, "A land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose bills you may dig brass." I think the stones and the brass here are to indicate stability of dwelling, in contrast to the tents they had, and dwelt in in the wilderness which were merely temporary ones, they soon were torn to pieces, they soon came to nothing; but here, in this land of plenty, whose stones are iron, out of whose hills you may dig brass, here you have permanence of dwelling. So in our mortal life, our poor tents, our poor tabernacles, they wear out, they come to nothing, this earthly house of our tabernacle must come down and must mingle with the dust, but then there are immortal dwellings in reserve; "in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you." Then in comes the permanent dwelling place in the promised land, where we may dwell in fertile valleys, on fruitful mountains, where we may lie down in green pastures and beside the still waters; and here again we may eat bread without scarceness, we shall not lack any good thing in it. Bless the Lord then for permanency of sacrificial perfection and for permanency of

dwelling. And then, thirdly, this phrase is used to represent the firmness of the Christian's standing too. Hence, "your shoes shall be iron and brass;" and then the next clause explains what this means; "As your days, so shall your strength be." Only Christians are so prone to misunderstand that scripture, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

We can understand it very nicely when we meet with a difficulty, and overcome it without its being anything worth calling a difficulty to us, we manage it, and get over it, and pass by it, and everything seems to come straight, and the valleys exalted, and the mountains lowered, and everything come right: oh, how gracious the Lord is, that as our days so shall our strength be. We even talk then, even some of us that are slow of speech, as Moses was, we can turn quite eloquent then, under those circumstances. But let the Lord come in and take your property away, let the Lord come in and afflict your family, and destroy them as he did Jobs, children, as though he hated them all; and let the Lord seem still to come in upon you, and afflict you, as he did Job, and then, as Job did, curse the very day of your birth. Where is your eloquence now? Where is the promise now? is it by this circumstance brought to nothing? Not a whit of it, and that the devil knew, the devil was not at all pleased with Job cursing the day of his birth; that did not please Satan. Satan would say to Job, oh you fool, what is the good of that? I told God that you would *curse him*, and instead of your cursing God, you are cursing yourself, why do not you curse God? that is what I want you to do, give up the truth, Job; I want you to turn your back upon that terrible doctrine that you hold, did not you say that your God is of one mind, and none can turn him, that he performs the thing appointed for you. Now, Job, I want you to give that up. No, that I never will, never give that up. So that Job's strength was in proportion to his day, that is, though, he had to give up his property, and his family, and his health, and his friends, and give up everybody's good opinion, for nobody had a good opinion of Job then, he was the worst man in the world: and yet with all Job's weakness he was not weak enough to let go God's truth, he held that fast. And therein consisted the patience of Job, and the strength of Job, and the stability of Job, as the fulfilment of the promise that "your shoes shall be iron and brass;" you shall stand firm in the truth, "and as your days, so shall your strength be." And you find that the Holy Spirit has explained this firmness of standing in close connection with the words I have just mentioned. "The eternal God is your refuge," God in his eternity is your refuge; you shall never be weak enough to give that up; "and underneath are the everlasting arms," you shall never be weak enough to give that truth tip; "and he shall thrust the enemy out from before you," which Christ did at Calvary's Cross, and which he does when he casts the devil out of the heart, and reconciles, us to himself, "and shall say: Destroy them." So that the enemy being destroyed can rise against us no more. Here it is then: that your shoes shall be iron and brass; as your days, so shall your strength be? The Lord help you to tread this morning upon the old serpent, he has been twitting you with infirmities and faults, and wants to persuade you that you are not a Christian; whereas you are to overcome by the blood of the Lamb, to standfast in the remedy, to stand fast in the truth, and having done all to stand. Here then is stability of sacrificial service, stability of dwelling, and stability of standing.

And then, fourthly, it is made use of to indicate a subject that lies very near to my heart, that of decision. When the Lord called Jeremiah to the prophetic office he made use of this as one of the metals to indicate the decision of the prophet, and to remind, him of the necessity of standing out with that decision; and to indicate to the prophet that the more decided he was the more liberty he would enjoy, the more freedom he would enjoy. If he suffered the smiles of the one or the frowns of the other to have the least influence whatever upon him he would stop hesitating, and would

hardly know which way to go, and while he was hesitating the devil would put the muzzle upon him, and would bind him, and get him into the stocks, And therefore the best way is to stand right out, stand to no repairs under any circumstance whatever. Hence the Lord said, "Arise, and speak unto them all that I command you; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them." If you are more afraid of them than you are of me, then you are not fit to be my servant; if you are more concerned to obtain the smiles of dying mortals than the smiles of heaven, then you are not fit to be my servant; if you have mixed in your mission any one fleshly object whatever, then you are not fit to be my servant. "Speak unto them all that I command you;" never mind what the kings may command you, nor what the princes may command you, nor what the people may command you, but speak unto them that which I command you. "For behold, I have made you this day a defended city;" to show the stability of the man: "and an iron pillar," to show the true metal of the man; "and brazen walls," can stand the fire, and the shot, and the battering ram, and stand persecution, endure all that may come against him; "against the whole land, against the kings of Judah." Ah, but they have very great power: so, they have, but I have more power than they have, I will control their power; "against the princes thereof." Well, but they are very noble creatures; they may be officially; but if they oppose the truth you must stand opposed to them: "and against the priests thereof," pretty priests, certainly, very pretty priests, certainly, they are the last persons in the world that ought to have stood opposed to God's truth; to stand there between God and men, and personate a Mediator, and yet for the priests themselves to oppose the very truths indicated in the office they held, and in the sacrifices they offered. "And against the whole land. And they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you." Why not? "For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you." Now Jeremiah, to show the true metal of the man, stood fast in both covenants; he was honest and clear in describing that covenant under which they were, with all its penalties: then take his 31st and 33rd chapters; you will there see he is equally faithful and decisive in describing the new covenant. There is no prophet that enlarges more beautifully upon the new covenant than does Jeremiah in his 31st and 33rd chapters, and his text out of which it all arises is this: "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you;" that was Jeremiah's text, and he found in that eternal love, in that effectually attractive love, all the delights which he records in the after parts of that chapter, as well as other parts of his book, where he speaks so decidedly and beautifully of the truths of the everlasting covenant. Thus, then, here is stability of sacrificial service, stability of dwelling, stability of standing, and stability of decision.

But I must come to the mountains. I have made these remarks as kind of correlative evidences that this metal, brass, is made use of figuratively, carrying the reigning idea of strength, stability, or durability, whichever term you may prefer; the one includes the other. Now I think these two mountains of brass seem an allusion to mounts Gerizim and Ebal. You find in the 11th of Deuteronomy, that Moses commanded the curses and the blessings to be pronounced respectively on mount Ebal and mount Gerizim; you find this repeated in the 27th of Deuteronomy, and you find in the 8th of Joshua that it was carried out, so that the curses were pronounced upon mount Ebal, and the blessings were pronounced upon mount Gerizim. These were two mountains, as you are aware, towards the northern part of the land of Canaan; Ebal stood northward of Gerizim, and of course Gerizim consequently south of Ebal; these are the two mountains, and Gerizim is the higher mountain of the two. I am inclined to think that our text, refers to these two mountains; and the significance we shall presently see, I think, as we go along; after I have just said a word or two more upon the great fact of stability. Now my hearer, what is clearer, that is, to those who are

taught of God, than the stability of the law of God? Is it not said that not one jot nor tittle of that law shall fail? Ah, think of it, friends, just think of it for a moment, that he that offends in one point, if it be only one sinful thought during the whole of your life time, that one sinful thought arises from a root that is within you. Such is the stability of God's law in every iota of it that, he that offends in one point is guilty of the whole. "Cursed is he that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Ah, my hearer, talk of a man in the condemned cell, heavily ironed, despairing of escaping the gallows; why, that security that holds him is nothing in comparison of the dreadful chains with which you that are dead in sin are held, and you know it not. Oh, little do you think what an almighty grasp the eternal law of God has taken of you; little do you think how that Law will drag you out of the grave at the last day, and take your soul, I will not say out of hell, for your soul will bring its hell with it, and re-unite the soul and the body, and all your inward and outward sins will then appear to you in their hideous form, and you have nothing before you but that which is thus described "Tophet is ordained of old, for the king," namely, for Satan, the king of the bottomless pit, and all that, are with him; "it is prepared, he has made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord," the breath of his eternal indignation; the breath of his eternal law, like a stream of brimstone, "doe kindle it;" and that law shall never, never, no, never cease to breathe vengeance upon the man that is not found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here then is an awful stability; that law must stand; either in the suffering of a surety, or else in the condemnation of the sinner. Are these matters to be trifled with? are these matters to be passed lightly over? Lose sight of the stability of God's law, and the result is you care but little about what kind of gospel you hold. The reason in our day that men do not appreciate God's gospel more in its purity is because they are strangers to what the law really is. Hence said the apostle, and no doubt he said it with very great pleasure, to think there were some, that like himself knew the law was spiritual, and that they were carnal, sold under sin, he says, "I speak to them that know the law;" and those that knew the law died to all hope of ever pleasing God by the law; and they became dead to the law, and the law became dead to them, and they became united in the bond of an everlasting covenant to Christ Jesus; and covenant blood became their theme; covenant righteousness; became their boast; covenant mercy became their song, covenant promise became their stay; and a covenant God became their glory.

Here is eternal stability then, in mount Sinai, intended as I think by one of these mountains of brass. The curses were pronounced on one mountain, but the gospel, or the blessings, were pronounced on the other mountain. Is not that gospel? I think so. I must be careful how I speak, because it is always painful to me to differ from good, and great men, I do not like to differ from them, if I can possibly help it, but still I, am sure some who are now living who differ from me perhaps in their view, will not think that I differ from them from any unkind or improper feeling, or aiming to be singular, God forbid that I should so trifle with the ponderous realities of the everlasting gospel, but it does appear to me to be almost beyond dispute that the two mountains are intended to set forth, one the law of God, because the curses were pronounced on the one, and the gospel of God, the blessings, were pronounced on the other; And I am sure stability is the primary, the reigning characteristic of each. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." The love of God pass away! if you have not a lover on earth, if you are a lover of Jesus you have a lover in heaven, if you have not a friend on earth, you have an almighty one in heaven, and the Almighty Friend you have in heaven is also on earth: yes, "whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none upon the earth I desire beside you." If you have not a stay on earth you have a stay in heaven; and if you have nothing to assure you of happiness, peace, or joy on earth

you have something to assure you of life endless, light eternal, joy intense and indescribable, altogether unspeakable, in God's presence and at his right hand, where your Forerunner is enthroned to bear you before the throne and plead your cause for ever there. I need not dwell then upon the stability of the gospel, because it is a self-evident sort of thing.

Second: I now hasten to notice *the UNITION of these two mountains of judgment and mercy*. I enter upon it with delight. First, here is the curse to be pronounced on mount Ebal, the northern mountain, but see the sweet command: You shall build an altar there, on mount Ebal, not on mount Gerizim, but on mount Ebal, and you get this fulfilled in the 8th of Joshua, to which I shall have to refer again very particularly; there is an altar built, and there are the burnt offerings, and the peace offerings. And where did Jesus come to? He came under the law, he came to where the curses were, he came to where the wrath was, he came to where the sin was, he came to where the death was, he came to where the bitter cup was, he came to where the sword of justice was, he came, and what has he done that that has caused the following declaration to stand on record, which ministers, (they will forgive me I hope for finding fault with them,) most dreadfully misunderstand. They tell us the Millennium is coming, when there is to be no more curse. Ah, good brother, do not talk like that: talk better than that, talk more wisely than that, remember that it is as true now that there is no more curse as it will be when we are in heaven. When Jesus said, "It is finished;" then came that record in lines of blood, "There shall be no more curse." There is a curse in the first Adam, but seeing the second Adam met that curse, and endured the judgment that came upon all men, arrested that judgment, stopped that judgment, so that not one of the curses can leave mount Ebal to curse any of the people; all the curses are taken away by the sacrifice, taken away by Jesus Christ, so that there is no more curse. Let me try to show the contrast here, I will take the curse first without the blessing, and then take the blessing without the curse, and see the difference. If you take the curse without the blessing, then it is all wrath and no favor; it is all night, and no day; it is all death, and no life; it is all bondage, and no liberty; it is all degradation and no exaltation; it is all sorrow, and not a particle of joy; it is all wretchedness without the least vestige of hope whatever; it is all condemnation, without one thread (I was going to say) towards justification. But if I take the other side, and now look at the curse as being gone, then I have all life and no death; I have all light, and no darkness; I have all justification, and no condemnation; I have all sanctification, and no corruption; I have all freedom, and no bondage; I have all favor, and no wrath; I have all joy, and no sorrow; I have all exaltation, and no degradation: I have all glory, and no disgrace; I have all strength, and no weakness; I have all immortality; I have all riches, and no poverty; I have all blessedness without one drawback to it.

Here is the unition then, what I mean by unition, the union of judgment and mercy; that is to say, that judgment and mercy met in Christ, only instead of his stopping the mercy and letting the judgment go on, he stopped the judgment and let the mercy go on: he kept the judgment to himself. Here, he says, are judgment and mercy, what shall I do? shall I keep the mercy, and let judgment overtake them? If I let judgment go on and punish them, they will never survive it, but I am almighty; I have infinite resources in myself. No, I will not keep the mercy, and let judgment overtake them; I will keep the judgment, endure the judgment, and endure the curse; I will stop the whole of it, I will lead captivity captive and then boundless mercy in unison with justice shall go rolling on and shall overtake them. Hence the 94th Psalm has a beautiful idea upon this, where it is said that judgment shall return unto righteousness? Judgment was proceeding against us, but Christ brought in his righteousness, judgment turned to Christ's righteousness, judgment is

satisfied with that; “judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it.”

There is not anything under heaven my soul so follows after as Christ in his work; Christ having arrested judgment; Christ the end of the law, the end of death, the end of the curse. Outside of this land I say, “My soul follows hard after you in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;” but as soon as I get into this land where judgment is returned unto righteousness, where mercy and truth have thus met together, righteousness and peace kiss each other, and the thunders of Sinai are forever hushed, there I have all that a sinner can need, and there I rejoice, and join in the loud voice of “Salvation, unto him that sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever.” But not only is there this union in Christ of judgment and mercy, judgment stayed and mercy rolling on; and goodness and mercy will roll on until all the vessels of mercy are filled with mercy, and brought into the ocean of mercy, to the God of mercy; but there are some more points to be noticed here, and the next is that the curses and the blessings were kept distinct; the blessings were on one mountain and the curses on the other. What do you mean by this? Mean? More than I can express. Cursed, forever cursed be that gospel that mixes up the two; that is what I say. The people that are cursed must be cursed; and the man that takes away the curse from its proper place is an enemy to the gospel. The people that are blessed are blessed; and the man that attempts to take these blessings away from the blessed, and offer them, to men in general, is an enemy of the gospel. Cursed be such a gospel; I do not say, cursed be such men: no, God forbid; but cursed be such gospels; may the Lord blast them all, that there may be no gospel left but that that stands out distinct. See how clear the Bible is in keeping them distinct, if you do not keep them distinct, why, the sinner remains ignorant of both. All the use some make of the law is to take it as what they call a rule of life; not that they practically do so, not; one out of them. Ah, but I hold it, sir. Hold it! why do not sit there and lie. Ah, but I practice it; you do not practice it. Do you think I do not? I am sure you do not. How do you prove it? I wish you could prove you did. How do you prove I do not? Well, it is for you to prove you do.

Now I will ask you one question; “You, shall love your neighbor as yourself;” do you do that? Well, I think I do. You will excuse me, but I do not believe you. One of old who was rich came to the Savior, and the Savior mentioned several commandments; and he said, “All these have I kept, what lack I yet?” Ah, young man, you are deceiving yourself; if you loved your neighbor as yourself, you would give your money to the poor around you. Look at that poor man who has not a bit of clothes to go to chapel on Sunday, why do not you give him a suit? There is a man who has his rent to pay, and through affliction cannot pay it, why do not you go and pay it for him? Look at that poor woman, see how she is obliged to work to get food for her family, why do not you go and relieve her? Hem! Yes, you may hem! that’s about it, you know. Ah, it is so easy to talk, my hearers, but God will not be content with talk, and I tell you this morning plainly that were it not for the great law Fulfiller, who did practically love his neighbor as himself, not a soul under heaven would escape the damnation of hell.

The blessings and the curses then were kept apart. I might point you to a great many scriptures that are clear upon this matter. What was there at Sinai but wrath? and what is there at mount Zion but blessing, where the Lord has commanded blessing, even life for evermore. Does not the apostle in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 distinguish between law and gospel as clear as language can do it? They

are kept apart then, my hearer, in order that we may see our need of Christ, and also see the blessing that the Savior has established.

Another thing is that half of the people were to stand upon the acclivity of Ebal, and half of the people upon the acclivity of Gerizim. And what is this to teach us? Why, that God will have the law in its judgment attested with equal force with that of the gospel. His people shall be as much witnesses of the righteousness, authority, majesty, power, and condemning force of the law as they shall of the blessings of the gospel. See you not how clear the scriptures are upon this. Take the 5th of Romans, where the apostle reads out to us judgment by one man, the first Adam: and grace and eternal life by the Second Adam, Christ Jesus the Lord. Equally attested. And I cannot find language to describe to you, how important this matter is. Your time is gone, I must advance only one more idea, though I shall require another sermon if I am spared upon these words, because I like them very much. One more idea, and that is this: that it is a remarkable thing that when this altar was built, and the curses and blessings pronounced, the ark of the covenant was there. This you will find in the 8th of Joshua, to which I thought I should have to refer, which I shall before I have done with the subject, just say this morning, there was the presence of the ark of the covenant, and when Jesus died on Calvary's cross there was present with him the everlasting covenant. He died as a covenant Surety, as a covenant Mediator, he died as the Surety of this better covenant. Hence, he is said to be brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant. And it seems to convey this idea: here is the ark, neglect the altar, do not erect the altar, do not offer a burnt offering, do not offer sacrifice, then says the ark of the covenant, I, with the mercy-seat will retire, and the people must perish. And so at Calvary's cross, there is the ark of the covenant, with the mercy-seat, and there it is waiting to see what the sacrifice will do, and when the sacrifice had done its work, endured the curse, gained the victory, then the covenant is confirmed, the mercy-seat is established, the Surety is raised from the dead, the curse is no more, the blessing shall reign for ever and ever; Amen and Amen.