

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A GOOD PROSPECT.

A Sermon ✓

BY MR. JAMES WELLS.

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“Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isaiah xxxv. 10.

THERE is in heaven no sorrow, no sighing, no pain : there is in hell nothing but sorrow, sighing, pain, weeping, gnashing of teeth. Let us bless God—those of us that have any hope—that we have a hope of interest in the one and of escape from the other. And while by the fall of man sorrow is secured to all men,—“Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward”—yet let us look at the Lord’s mercy in sparing us, and bless his holy name that if, on the one hand, we are not yet in heaven, let us bless God we are not in hell—we are where the gospel is, where the Lord Jesus Christ is, where mercies are. And when we can balance, even in this time-state, the Lord’s mercies over against our sins and our troubles, we see how his mercies do indeed outweigh the whole. When the fall of man took place there would have been nothing but sorrow, ten thousand times worse than it is, had it not been that the Lord interposed a covenant of providence, declaring that seed-time and harvest, day and night, and so of the rest, should not cease while the earth remained. And the reason that he introduced this covenant of providence was because there was in the back ground—and indeed had already been declared—a covenant of grace. It was on account of the covenant of grace that he brought forward a covenant of providence ; and it is on account of that covenant that he appears in his providences now ; yea, it is on the ground of the great purpose of eternal salvation that he continues his kindnesses unto us in a providential sense. There is no name to plead in this matter like the name of Jesus. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how

shall he not with him also freely give us all thing?" Though I apprehend the sorrows and the sighings spoken of in our text,—while I would not for a moment exclude therefrom the common sorrows, bereavements, afflictions, troubles, and adversities of life; because the Lord doth sympathize with the people under all their troubles, let those troubles be what they may,—still, I think the sorrows and the sighings here spoken of refer primarily and chiefly to spiritual things. I shall therefore, this morning, dwell rather largely upon the evidences of interest in this beautiful language—"Sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" and the preceding part of the verse shows what is to take the place of this sorrow and sighing,—that it is to be "everlasting joy." Those who are born of God do from time to time look about for their evidence of interest in eternal things. I will, then, notice first *the tribulation*—"sorrow and sighing;" secondly, *how these sorrows and this sighing shall flee eternally away.*

First, *the tribulation* :—what is meant by this sorrow and this sighing? We must take it spiritually; and it is very minutely and beautifully described in this same chapter. Those weaknesses which the people of God experience are described in this chapter. You will at once perceive that those weaknesses and fears cannot be felt literally by a person who is literally dead. A dead man could not be the subject of the weaknesses and infirmities, the sorrows and the sighing, spoken of in this chapter. Just so spiritually; if we know something spiritually of the sorrows and of the sighings spoken of in this chapter, it is because the soul is born of God. However destitute we may be of evidences of interest in the Lord, however lost our hope may be, or however weak our faith, yet if we have a consciousness of these weaknesses, then it is a proof that there is divine life in the soul. And after all, every Christian is brought to see that everything depends upon character. Either I am born of God or I am not. If I am, all is well; if I am not, and dying in that state, then all is wrong, all deceptive, and all dreadful. Can we, therefore, be too careful in looking after those teachings of the Holy Spirit that distinguish those that are born of God from those that are not? Now it saith in this chapter, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." Here are weakness and feebleness. What are we to understand by the weak hands? Here is a sinner convinced of what he is; he sees that there is a Jesus Christ just adapted to his necessities; and he sees that the promises of God, the promise of pardon, and everything else that we need in a way of grace and mercy by Jesus Christ, are exactly suited to us. Ah, he says, if I could get hold of the promise the Lord made to Abraham,—“In blessing I will bless thee;” if I could get hold of the assurance that Christ died for me; if I could get hold of an assurance that God in

his immutable counsel is on my side, then I should be happy. But such an one is made to feel he can no more get hold of the promise in the life and power of it, he can no more lay hold of Jesus Christ and obtain virtue from him, bring himself into the presence of God or into the enjoyment of eternal things, than he could meet the full and the perfect demands of God's holy law. God's law is spiritual, holy, just, and good; and we have nothing but a carnal, sinful, fallen nature with which to meet that law; so that that law would put a negative upon everything we do. Hence we are said to have the sentence of death in ourselves, because the Lord makes us conscious that the law puts a negative upon everything we are and do apart from Christ. So, then, the man looks at the law, and sees there is nothing there but blackness and darkness; he looks at the gospel, and he cannot believe it is for him; he cannot lay hold of it, and he cannot get at it. And when people tell us to come to Christ, and come to Christ, we come to the Bible, and we see which is right of the two. The one saith we are to come to Christ, and come now, and come to-day;—men that tell us to come to Christ, and reprove us because we do not lay hold of eternal life and come to Christ, these men are liable to err, they are not infallible; but One that is infallible saith, "No man can come to me except it be given to him of my Father;" he that is infallible saith, concerning his people^s in his dealings with them, that "the time shall come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it." Thus you shall go on and learn your weakness, what a poor feeble creature you are, and you have nothing in yourself but that that has a tendency to increase this weakness. Oh, the heart unbelieving, the heart impenitent, the heart like lead, the heart like the adamant stone, the soul fettered and imprisoned as with gates of brass and bars of iron, causeth such to say, "I am shut up, and cannot come forth unto the house of the Lord." There is a secret sighing in the soul, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." Now, my hearer, dost thou feel that thou art this poor weak creature, this poor piece of stubble, this poor autumnal leaf? dost thou feel that all thy righteousness are as filthy rags, that thou dost fade as a leaf, that thou art altogether an unclean thing? If so, this will cause thee sorrow. You hear a sermon, and in your judgment you say that the minister bore a good and an honourable testimony, but you could get nothing; you shall read the most beautiful chapters in the Bible, and you shall hear the most beautiful hymns given out and sung; or you may read the most excellent books, and try to pray, or hear Christians converse upon eternal things, but all seems dark, cold, miserable, wretched. Why, says the enemy, you a Christian? you have Christian experi-

ence! you go to heaven! Why, you are dead. Whereas, if the man were really dead, he would not be conscious of this darkness, weakness, hardness, and wretchedness. I will undertake to say that when Saul of Tarsus was dead in sin he never said, "Oh, wretched man that I am." No; it is those who are thus born of God, brought to feel their weakness. Ah, how this humbles us down. Then you read not only of this weakness and feebleness, but we are to comfort the feeble-minded, as the apostle saith, to speak comfortably to them. Ah, what poor, weak, feeble creatures we are. I know by experience from time to time a great deal of this, so that I can truly say, and I say it because you can say the same, that are born of God, in relation to the word of God,—

"If I lisp,"—ah, it is but a lisp,—

"If I lisp a song of praise,

Each note shall echo, grace free grace."

Nothing else can pick up such poor, weak, feeble creatures as we are. Truly, truly, saith one, "Once have I heard, yea, twice, that power belongeth unto God." Ah, then, we have heard that no man can receive anything, except it be given him from above.

Then, again, these persons are said to be fearful. "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong." Well, say you, you are to tell them to be strong. My telling is nothing, friends, unless the Lord himself blow the trumpet, unless he himself speak the word. Ministers are to speak the word, and the Lord is with them; but it is only just as he enables you to realize his presence and power that the work is done. So here is fearfulness of heart. This fearfulness of heart relates to self. Ah, for how many people can you believe, but cannot believe for yourself. You look at those of our friends (and the Lord seems taking one from us now every week,) that die in the Lord; you feel no doubt about them; you see that they were Christians; and yet while you see this, and are satisfied of their state,—you look at their evidences, and can see they were true scriptural evidences; you possess just the same evidences, and though you possess them, for the life of you you cannot believe for yourself as you can for them. You are ready to say with David, "Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." My heart is so weak, that I do not feel able to believe, that God has loved me, that Christ has died for me, that the Lord hath called me, that I am his. Therefore it is we have this beautiful direction, "Wait on the Lord and he shall strengthen thine heart." It does not say when;—he will do it when he sees that we are got weak enough to appreciate his sovereign grace and dealings with us. "Wait on the Lord, and he shall strengthen thine heart;

wait, I say, on the Lord." And when the Lord sees that they are shut up, and cannot come forth, he will repent himself concerning his servants; he will come in and strengthen our hearts by the manifestation unto us of his eternal mercy. Fearfulness of heart. You can believe the Lord will bring that man out of trouble, and you have the same experience, the same hope, and the same faith, but you cannot believe he will bring you out of trouble; you believe that that man's circumstances, under the unerring government of the blessed God, will work together for his good, but you cannot believe that your circumstances will work together for your good. You believe that the Lord will take care of that Christian man and that Christian woman, but you cannot believe he will take care of you. Some of us are almost like the palsied man,—he does not seem to have had a grain of faith; therefore when he was brought to Jesus, "Jesus, seeing *their* faith;" not the man's faith, for he does not seem to have had any; they could believe for him; and how was the man brought to believe for himself? Why, by the rolling in of God's eternal mercy;—his sins were forgiven, his guilt was gone, his burden gone, his weakness gone, his trouble gone; and then the Lord healed his body as well; so the man went off happy in soul, healed in body, and constrained to believe that the Lord had loved and saved him. So then here are these godly sorrows. Happy the man that knows something of these bitter herbs. So sure as you taste the bitter herbs, you shall ere long partake of the paschal lamb; so sure as you know something of eating these ashes like bread, so sure as you know something of these godly sorrows, so sure shall they be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." I am sure, friends, you will at once readily recognise the solemn truth that our text belongs only to Christians, to believers, to them that are born of God. Are there any here this morning that know not the Lord? Ah, your sorrows, if you die in that state, will never flee away; your sins will remain with you in all their terrible force and power; all the curses of the Bible will remain with you; the wrath of God abideth on you. Ah, your sorrows, your sighings, will never flee away; and if you have many sorrows or many afflictions, in life, these are but the beginning of sorrows to you, these are but the beginning of sighings to you. I dare to say the rich man had some few troubles in life, amidst all his faring sumptuously every day; but they were but a few, just the beginning of sorrows compared with that scene of things in which he appears when he lifts up his eyes in hell. The Lord make us, then, all to know what godly sorrow is. Better to sorrow all our lives long after the Lord, if we are saved at last, than to rejoice all

our lives long, and yet be lost at last. There is not anything, certainly, so well worth living for as the eternal salvation of our souls.

Now these same persons to whom the promise belongs are spoken of as dim-sighted. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened." A man literally dead does not feel that he is blind. The dead man is blind; but a man may be blind without being dead; and so the Christian feels his blindness. There are two points upon which the Christian feels his blindness; the one is of great importance to him, the other is not of so much importance to him. The one thing in which he sees his blindness is that he sees that he cannot see clearly his election of God, he does not clearly see his interest in eternal things, he does not clearly see that he has a standing in God's everlasting love. This is one large part of the experience of the majority of the people of God. There are some favoured to walk in a clearer sight of their interest in eternal things than others. In that sense, then, they feel as it were blind, and none but the Lord himself can lighten them upon this matter. The next respect in which they feel their blindness, which is not of so much importance, is in relation to tribulations. I cannot see, saith one, what necessity there was for me to have this trouble, and that and the other; it looks to me as though it would have been a great deal better if I had not had that trouble. I dare say Job thought the same,—no doubt about it. And another saith, Here is this trouble, I wish I could see my way out of it, but I cannot; and there is that trouble, I wish I could see my way out of it, but I cannot; and there is that circumstance, I wish I could see my way out of it, but I cannot. And so we are obliged to fall in with the old proverb, that "what cannot be cured must be endured." And if the thorn remain, our God will not be angry with us; he sees that we cannot see our way to be freed from it; and besides, he himself has said, "I will bring the blind,"—not that they are really blind, but they are in this sense,—"by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Well, friends, however blind we are, what a mercy it is we have a God to see for us. You may imagine the right-minded Israelite, when he was leaving the eastern shore of the Red Sea, saying,—Well, here is a terrible desert before us; I do not know which way to go; but the Lord goeth before us in the cloud, and he will guide us; he has shown us how matters shall be, he has shown us how he will overcome our adversaries, how he will bring us into the promised land, which way we shall go. We do not know;—all we have to do

is to abide by him. Just so now, friends; tarry by the stuff; and "as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike." "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name;" and "because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." And thousands of professors, when that temptation comes, will give up their profession, but you have kept my word, and my word shall keep you; so that when the hour of temptation, let it be martyrdom, or whatever it may become, I will then keep thee, and that word which you have kept, you shall find to be a word of life, light, strength, support, and direction to you when the tribulation shall come. So, then, while we are very short-sighted, our God is not short-sighted; darkness and light are all the same to him. He hath chosen our inheritance for us; he sees the way thereto, and we are to go on in the strength of Christ. "Abide in me," saith the Saviour, cleave to me; as the branch gets all its good from the vine, you must get all your good from me. Whatever you do, do not leave the complex person of Christ, the work of Christ, the positive and decisive testimonies of Christ; abide there, and ere long you will have to say, as the church did of old, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God;" God will establish it for ever, and by and by we shall see all that our souls have longed to know and realize.

Then they are spoken of as deaf. How often the Christian goes away from the house of God, and says, I might as well have been deaf as for any good I have got this morning, or this evening. And ministers sometimes blame the people. Well, if the minister blames the hearer for not hearing better, I think the hearer might with equal justice blame the minister for not preaching better; and I wonder how the minister would like that. You know we clergymen do not like to be found fault with; we are apt to kick pretty easily if we are found fault with. And yet if we blame the hearer for not hearing better, I think the hearer might, with just the same justice, blame the minister for not preaching better. The truth is this,— "it is not by human might, human effort, human eloquence, or human acquirements, it is by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The minister can speak profitably to the people only as the Lord enables him; and the people can hear profitably only as the Lord enables them; therefore Jesus, seeing this, saith, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We do not always see him in our midst, but he always sees us. Joseph sees his brethren, and that they are his brethren, when they see not, know

not, do not recognize him; but ere long Joseph will make himself known to his brethren, and will show the wonders of the Most High in foreseeing what troubles should come to pass, and how they should be provided against; and that he is a God ever to be trusted, where we cannot trace him; he is a God that never did and never will deceive. He will take care that ministers and hearers that are taught by him shall cease from man, shall have no confidence in the flesh, but that their confidence shall be in the Lord alone. And these same persons are spoken of as lame. I am uncommonly glad of that, because I am lame in prayer, in believing, in my love to the Lord, and one of the most lame preachers that ever was. I dare say, you sometimes say inwardly, Well, this is a poor, lame sermon; really, what a poor lame preacher that is, hobbling along somehow or another; what a poor lame thing he is. And if you do not say so, I can tell you I feel it; therefore I am very glad it is owned the Lord's people are lame. And do you not feel that the best services you render to the Lord are poor, lame services, compassed with infirmity? And yet it saith in this same chapter, "the lame man shall leap as an hart." Ah, that is when the Lord comes in, and gives perfect soundness, takes the lameness away; then, indeed, the lame man shall leap as an hart, can run through troops, and leap over walls. Well, then, while the best of you serve the Lord but in a poor, lame way, bless the Lord that there was one in whose service there was no infirmity. Jesus Christ was perfect; he himself, without infirmity, took our infirmities upon him, and yet not one infirmity mingled with anything he ever said or did. There we have eternal perfection, there we lose all our sorrows, all our sighings, in the everlasting joy he has brought in.

Then they are said to be dumb, and there is the promise, "the tongue of the dumb shall sing." The dumb—how true that is. I can tell you this,—it is very hard work for me to preach when I am dumb. Many a time have I come into this pulpit when I have felt I had very little to say, if anything, and I have said it with the utmost difficulty; shut up,—as Huntington somewhere says, when the cross lies heavy upon the shoulder, the speech is fettered, the soul narrowed, the heart contracted, the devil at your right hand tempting you, and a thousand things knocking you about; and it is very difficult then to say anything at all. And when I have left the pulpit I have thought, I wonder how many blunders I have made; for I have felt once or twice as though I had lost myself almost. It is astonishing what poor infirm creatures we are. I suppose the apostle means something like this, when he says, "I, through infirmity, preached the gospel unto you." He felt what a poor infirm creature he was, and so he might well say, "We preach not ourselves,"

or it would be a very poor subject; and he saith, "I was among you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." Here, then, are these godly sorrows of the people of God. "I was dumb," saith one, "I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Ah, the Lord shuts our mouths sometimes, and we do not know what to say. You read of Job, and Job's friends sympathizing with him;—they sat on the ground day after day, for seven days, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great. He did not know what to say, and they did not know what to say; and when poor Job did begin to speak, we find a great deal of secret rebellion created in his feelings, and he brought out that rebellion; but ere long mercy rolled in and swallowed up that rebellion, so that Job realized the truth of our text, "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

I will not now dwell upon the common tribulations of life. Perhaps I have said enough upon this department; but I do feel very anxious about this. My hearer, be assured that where the Holy Spirit is the teacher, one of the great things he teacheth us is what we are in ourselves; he teaches us our helplessness in these things, in order to humble us, and to make way for the coming in of what he hath for us. I am sure any minister that has a pretty good experience of what he himself is, might preach I do not know how many profitable sermons, from that one sentence in the parable of the prodigal son,—“when he came to himself.” What a significant sentence is that. When God is pleased to begin his work of grace in the heart, the very first thing he does is to bring the man to himself. The poor Pharisee had never been brought to himself;—what he himself really was; but the Lord brought the Publican to himself; and you see the difference between the two characters;—the one justified himself, the other condemned himself, and sighed for mercy, and went down to his house justified. How solemnly essential is this work of the Holy Spirit. It is this that makes us wise to salvation. The Lord has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; not to confound the wise in commercial things, or scientific, or political things; no: but when there is a cunningly devised fable, which they call gospel, real soul trouble discovers it to us. Whatever fleshly wisdom is displayed, for instance, in the formation of Popery, we feel that there is nothing for us in that, and we reject the whole; so of all false systems, cunningly-devised fables, to exalt the priesthood, enslave the people, insult the Saviour, rob God of his prerogatives, and make laws to govern the gospel, instead of the gospel governing other things. The Lord hath chosen, then, the foolish things of the world to confound all this religious wisdom; the weak things to overcome all these mighty things; and base things, things that are despised, and things that are nought, to bring to nought

things that are. They are brought to nought in their own eyes, and that brings to nought everything in their eyes but the religion of the Son of God.

Secondly, I notice *how these sorrows and this sighing shall flee eternally away*. They are gone by the Lord bringing into the manifestation of our souls his eternal salvation, so as to make us feel, if not in the same degree, the same kind of assurance of interest that Simeon felt when he said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And so in this same chapter, "Behold, your God will come with vengeance," against that that holds you in bondage, "even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." So then it is the bringing in of his eternal salvation, by which these sorrows and sighings pass away. There are a great many "Lo here's" and "Lo there's," a great many remedies proposed for godly sorrow; but where there is this real experience, there is only one remedy, and that David knew, when he said, "I am poor and sorrowful, let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high." I intended to bring in the former parts of this chapter; but I must pass them by, still keeping to the idea of salvation. And what do I mean here by salvation? Salvation has a variety of meanings, but I here mean by salvation that it takes away our sorrows, fills our mouths with laughter and our tongues with singing, and makes us glad the Lord has done such great things for us, I mean chiefly two things; first, freedom from sin, and secondly, that kind of safety by which our text is fulfilled. Hence it saith in this chapter, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness;" Jesus Christ is the highway, and he is the way of holiness; and he is called the way of holiness not merely because he is holy, for that would do us no good if he did not stand in the relative position he does as the end of sin;—he is the highway of holiness. But it saith, "an highway shall be there, and a way." What is this way? Here is a way by which you are to realize the blessedness of this highway. And what is the way that brings us into the highway? It is faith that doth it. "Did I not tell thee if thou wouldest believe?" Ah, Lord, I believe in my feeble way; help thou mine unbelief; overcome my unbelief, and that will bring me into this way of holiness, that will bring me to where I shall be found without sin, spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any such thing. Christ is the highway, and the Christian knows it is faith that brings him into the realization of that way. It is in this way, then, that sorrow and sighing shall flee away. There are a great many things included in these two ideas, the end of sin, and safety. Now it saith, "It shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the way-

faring men, though fools,"—in the eyes of the world; there is no man such a great fool in the eyes of the world as the successful preacher of the gospel. Look at some of the great men we have had;—Luther, Calvin, Huntington, and other great and able men; why, in their day, they were in the eyes of the world the greatest fools that ever lived;—caricatured in all sorts of ways, the world tried to represent them as this, that, and the other; but nevertheless they were wayfaring men, brought to where sin was ended, and where they were eternally safe. "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." But what is meant by "the unclean shall not pass over it"? I made up my mind that my sermon this morning should be an A B C sermon,—plain; therefore let us be plain upon that. Do you not see you have got the explanation in this same chapter? "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast." So, then, the unclean means the devil and his agents, that would corrupt the gospel of God. "For we are not as many, that corrupt the word of God;" throw in something to pervert it, to weaken it, to soften it down, to conform it to the taste of the so-called eminently pious. So, then, the unclean means the ravenous enemy. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there." How can Satan get into the city of God, the new Jerusalem? Regeneration is the way in, and the devil himself could not get there unless he was regenerated, and that he never will be, for then he would cease to be what he is. So there is safety there. Freedom and safety then;—Christ is the end of sin, and there is the freedom; and the unclean shall not pass over it,—there is the safety. Now to amplify this, let us have four or five scriptures in conclusion. In the 52nd chapter of this book you have the strength, the beauty, the liberty, and free redemption. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion," and that strength is Christ, the power of God; "put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem;" Christ is our beauty:—

"Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, the Lord our righteousness."

"He shall beautify the meek with salvation;" sorrow and sighing when this strength and beauty come in, flee away. "Shake thyself from the dust," put away all earthly confidences, "loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion;" when Christ comes in, our bands fall off, the prison doors are opened, the iron gate of the law opens of its own accord, and out we come from prison into liberty, become as hinds let loose, and can give goodly words; sorrow and sighing are fled; they will return again and again, but they cannot remain for ever. Then comes free redemption. "Ye have sold yourselves for nought," in the first Adam;

“and ye shall be redeemed without money.” How is that, Lord? My servant Peter will tell you. “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” It is the coming in of these things that takes away our sorrow and our sighing. Jeremiah xxxi. 12;—“Therefore they shall come and sing in the light of Zion,” the perfection of Christ; and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.” So, then, the coming in of Christ’s perfection, the coming in of God’s goodness by Christ Jesus, the coming in of the finest of the wheat, the coming in of the wine, the blood of the everlasting covenant, the coming in of the oil of his grace, and the sincere milk of the word;—when he thus comes in, sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These are the things we should seek after, because they are things that God hath promised; he has not promised you shall be perfect in the flesh, but he has promised you shall be perfect in Christ and in heaven. Then, again, come to Nahum;—“O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee,” as he did in the first Adam and in the old covenant; “he is utterly cut off,” finally defeated. Ah, the sweet Prince of life hath indeed swallowed up death, defeated the adversary. “Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ.” And then Zechariah refers to the same thing. “I will encamp about mine house, saith the Lord;” what for? To terminate the sorrows and sighings of the people. I will not go on to the ultimate termination; I am speaking now of how the Lord doth even now sometimes turn our sorrows into joy; and our God is our joy; therefore when Christ saith, “No man taketh your joy from you,” with safety you may read it for the sake of explanation,—God is your joy, and no man taketh your God from you, and no man can take you from your God, no man can pluck you out of his hand.

“Safe in our Redeemer’s hands,
Even when he hides his face.”

“I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by;”—the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side; they are not on our side, have not been brought into these godly sorrows, therefore do not understand the maladies of the man that has fallen among thieves;—“and because of him that returneth;” that is, the devil. You read that Satan left the Saviour for a little season; so it is with us,—he returns again and again.