

Horses and Chariots of Salvation

A SERMON – Preached on Sunday Morning, Feb. 25th, 1866, by

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“Then cried he upon me, and spoke unto me, saying, Behold, these that go to the north
Country have quieted my spirit in the North Country. Zechariah vi. 8

The Lord crying upon the prophet means that he called upon him: et vocavit me, he called upon me, as the Latin renders it-"he called upon me." And we need this work of the Lord every day, for if he did not continue, by his Spirit, and by his word, and by his dealings with us, to call upon us, we should soon cease to call upon him; therefore, if we continue to call upon the name of the Lord, if we continue in the spirit of grace and of supplication, not unto us, but unto his name be the glory. "And he spoke unto me; " and so, when the Lord calls upon us by affliction, he hath something to say to us that will do us good; and when he calls upon us by a hymn, or by a sermon, or by any part of his holy word, or by the dispensations of his providence or grace in any way he always has something to say to us that will do us good. And when in our right minds we must increasingly admire the infinity of the Lord's condescension in thus noticing poor worms of the earth, and speaking unto us as a man speaketh to his friend, or rather as a father speaketh unto his children, pitying us even as a father pities his children.

Now these horses and chariots spoken of in connection with our text we have, as you are aware, recently noticed; and I felt disposed to have one more sermon upon this same subject. I well know that these are not times in which we are to deal in the pulpit with mere fanciful things, with mere speculative matters, or empty disputations, or anything that is unprofitable. I think if ever there was a time in which it became Christians to be earnest it is our time, and I think if ever there was a time when it became ministers to be simple, and sincere, and plain, and to keep to their proper business that of preaching the gospel, I think it is the present time; for we are assured that there is no means by which real good can be done like that of the Holy Scriptures. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." If, therefore, what I am about to advance this morning should turn out to be merely speculative and fanciful-if some solemn and self-evident truths do not come out of the subject before us, then I shall be indeed deceived. And I cannot myself feel that there is much difficulty in understanding the mystical and spiritual meaning of these horse and chariots; setting forth, evidently in their primary meaning, the apostles, that went forth as God's chariots of salvation; he rode upon these chariots of salvation; they went forth into the ends of the earth for the salvation of men. I shall therefore first notice the power that are set before us. Secondly, what we are mystically to understand by the north. Thirdly and lastly, the quietude of the spirit, -"these have quieted my spirit in the north country."

I first notice, then, these powers. Here are red horses and black horses, and white horses, and grised and bay horses. This is a kind of parable that the Lord has given us, and it contains, in my estimation some self-evident and solemn truths. We have first, then, to notice-for I shall refer to them in the order in which they are here set before us-the red horses. Now the red horse stands as the figure of suffering

and of bloodshed. Hence Satan himself, because he shed the blood of the saints, is called the great red dragon. But here the horses, symbolizing and representing the apostolic powers, those powers in which the apostles went forth are called red because they themselves would have to shed their blood in the cause of God. But before entering into that department let us see if we can get a little light from the word of the Lord upon this; taking the red horse to mean a state of conflict, suffering, and martyrdom. Go to the first chapter of this book, and there you find a man riding on a red horse by night, and this man is in the same chapter called an angel, and this same man or angel interposes for Jerusalem, and he is represented as standing among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom or in the valley, and he is there for their protection. Now who is this but the Lord Jesus Christ? and why doth he there appear on a red horse but to set before us that same truth that he would on behalf of his people shed his precious blood, that he would on behalf of his people gain that victory which should never be forgotten? Now I think the 63rd of Isaiah throws a little light upon what is meant by the color here used. "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" We understand this as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Edom we understand to represent the world, and Jesus Christ coming from the world means, at least in my estimation that after that his hour was come, that he came from God and went to God; that time was come when he should depart out of this world. "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" He that conquered the world; he conquered it in his life. He met with every possible adverse power, but not one could overcome him. He overcame all the sin of the world and himself at the end of his life remained the spotless one, the faultless one. He overcame the errors of the world, and at the end himself was found the truthful one; no deviation from the truth. And he overcame the tribulations of the world, for all the waters of tribulation he met were not able to quench his love, nor the floods to drown it; so that he remained the loving One even unto the end; "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." And as he came under the law to obey the law, he became obedient even unto death. I take this to be a kind of explanation of the man riding upon a red horse by night. Was not the Saviour's life that night much to be remembered? Was not his path dark? Did not our sins darken his path? did not the clouds of Sinai darken his path? did not the universal slanders and reproaches heaped upon him darken his path? Were not the worst possible constructions put upon the best of his doings? He cast legions of devils out of the souls of men, brought those men not only into their right minds, but into the knowledge of salvation; and what was the construction put upon this? Why, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. And yet none of these things could provoke him to one act of disobedience. He was therefore, as testified by the apostle, "obedient unto death." Thus, then, the man riding on the red horse by night I take to mean that Christ should come into our night, and put an end to our night; he should come into our darkness, and put an end to our darkness; he should come under the law's demands which were upon us, and become unto us the end of the law for righteousness; that he should come into all our afflictions-in all our afflictions he was afflicted,-and put an end thereto. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Bozrah was the key fortress of Edom, and that fortress is a good figure of sin in its strongest form. He came with dyed garments from Bozrah, but he was "glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." Hence the answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." So, then, he came to the Edom of this world; there he laid down his precious life, there he shed his blood, there it cost him his life to annihilate sin; it cost him his life to end the curse, cost him his life to swallow up death in victory. Now, then, the horses spoken of in this vision I take to be the apostles, not in their persons, but in their official power, and they are called red to denote they should shed their blood, as most of them did, in the service of the Lord. The Saviour assured Peter that he should die by martyrdom; in what way Peter did die we know not; they say he was crucified with his head downwards at Rome, but there is not the least dependence whatever to be placed upon that tradition, for we have reason to believe that he never was at Rome at all, because Peter's mission lay to the east, not to the west; that tradition is a tradition of man, in which we should put no confidence. But still it is clear that the apostles, most of them, did die a martyr's death. And I need not remind you of Stephen, I need not

remind you of Rome pagan, that put thousands to death; I need not remind you of Rome papal, that also put thousands to death. Here, then, is the conflict; here is that that they underwent to obtain the victory; and they obtained the victory by the precious blood of the Lamb. And the red horses are put first, perhaps, to denote that the church should suffer most in her infancy; and it is just possible- I do not, of course, profess to know, but it is just possible that the church now, although more than eighteen hundred years old, is still in her infancy. For aught I know, this world may last hundreds of thousands of years yet, and if so, then the Christian church is even now comparatively in her infancy. So let us hope, only we must not hope too surely upon that, that the age of martyrdom will never return; we could hope that the circulation of the Holy Scriptures and the blessing of the Lord will prevent it returning. But while I make this remark in a way of hope, I confess at the same time I have not much confidence in that sort of hope, for we are quite sure that the spirit of enmity against the people of God exists now as strongly as it ever did. These, then, are the red horses, and this is the view I take of them,-that the Lord Jesus Christ laid down his life, and that the apostles were sent with that feeling in their minds, that they would have to suffer death in consequence of their decision for God, and that the early Christians also set out with that assurance, that they would have to suffer all sorts of persecution, and oven death, for the truth's sake. See how this accords with what the Saviour saith: "Except a man hate his father and his mother, his wife and his children, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." I need not stop here, it would be absurd to so insult your understandings, to remind you that the Saviour doth not there mean the slightest violence whatever to those relative affections which are natural; God himself, having implanted them in our nature, has ever honored their proper exercise, and ever will, down to the end of time. But nevertheless there is something better than life, and that something is the love of God and the salvation of Christ; there is something better than anything whatever, or all the things put together within the realms of nature, and that something is the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I think, therefore, this is one truth that is set before us, that Christ, such was his love, laid down his life for us, and that thousands he has called by his grace have laid down their lives for the truth, and that those who are called by his grace now, if they do not possess-they do possess; I ought not to say it they do not, because if called by grace they are sure to possess a martyr's spirit; they are sure to possess it. If I were to ask you now, those of you that know the Lord, you feel that there is not anything for which you could, in your senses, for one moment part with God's truth. Why, if to part with it were possible, to leave off believing in Christ, and become a disbeliever; to leave off believing in his truth, and become an enemy to that truth; to leave off your decision for him in that covenant that is established for you-why, this is something so monstrous in the estimation of the real Christian, that he despises the thought. Oh, how little, how paltry, are all the troubles of life in comparison of such a calamity as that, if such a calamity could take place! Remember, that all the time we hold fast the truth of God we thereby hold the remedy for everything; it does not matter what it is. If you are all at once smitten as Job was, the truth will be your support, and turn your captivity; and if cast into the depths of the sea, as Jonah was, that truth will bring you back again; or if into the fiery furnace, that truth can quench the violence of the fire; or if into the lions' den, it can stop the mouths of the lions. Therefore, if we are called upon by the Lord, it matters not what we have to venture for his name's sake. That I take to be the meaning or the significance of the red horse, then; first, the Saviour's laying down his life; second, the martyrdom that his people underwent, and then the fact that they will to the end of time possess a martyr's spirit. Why, when the Lord is with you, and brings you into the bond and confidence of his everlasting covenant, and grants you his presence, what care you for your sins then? Why, you would not do the Saviour the dishonor to set your sins above his salvation. What care you for Satan then? You would not do the Lord the dishonor to allow that Satan could hurt you while the Saviour is on your side. What care you for enemies then? You would not do him the dishonor to suppose that his hand is not on the neck of those enemies, and that he can stop their breath when he pleases. What care you for worldly pleasures and worldly joys then? The soul rises to higher climes, breathes a purer air, add saith with Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to

thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" and with the apostle Paul, "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." May the Lord then increase us in this martyr's spirit, and that will make us more zealous individually for the prosperity of our own souls. And always remember that the strength of a church lies in the character of its individual members and attendants; like the strength of a nation lies in the individual character of the persons that make up that nation; and "where there is a people possessing this martyr's spirit, if called upon so to do they would sacrifice anything and everything for the truth's sake; buy the truth at any price, sell it at no price.

Then come the black horses. The black horses mean two things. First, keeping up the idea of their being the ministers and people of God, they mean our state by nature. The minister comes, and he points out sin to be as black all night; he points out sin to be a darkness that might be felt; he points out the state of the sinner to be as black as Satan himself: that the sinner is, spiritually, like the darkest Ethiopian; and can the Ethiopian change his skin? So nothing done by the sinner can alter his condition; black within and black without; and happy the man who sees and feels this, and can honestly say,-

"Black, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

Black as the tents of Kedar, yet fair as the curtains of Solomon. Take the black, then, first, to represent the state we are in by nature. And is not this one part of the work of the minister? I never heard a minister go too far upon this-never. Why, there is not a dreg of hell that your nature has not in it; there is not a blasphemy throughout all the regions of the lost that your heart is not wicked enough to practice; there never was and there never will be a deception that your wicked heart is not capable of; "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." You that know the Lord would not like (and it is a right feeling too), you would not like to let the nearest and dearest friend you have know some of the infidelities and vile bubbling up of your wicked heart; and it would be very imprudent of you if you did. It is not always wise to tell even to the godly precisely what your exercises are in this way; and never tell them to the ungodly, for "the righteous falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring." They are sure to make use of what you tell them; not knowing the burden it is to you, not knowing how it makes you loathe yourself in your own sight, not knowing how it makes you prize the remedy, they will be sure to turn it against you. "A fool uttered all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." Thus, then, the black represents, first, our state by nature; that is one thing. And I could not hear a minister myself, if "I were a hearer tomorrow, that did not come down to me in what I am in my nature; that did not show the guilty; filthy, depraved, miserable state we are all in by nature. "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things;" and what shall we say to the man that does not continue in any one thing-not spiritually, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." See how this makes way for the reception of the Saviour. The next thing meant by the black horses is mourning, lamentation, sorrow, deep repentance, and solemn prayer, the same doctrine as in the 11th of the Revelation. "My two witnesses "-meaning his ministers-"shall prophesy in sackcloth "-not forever-"a thousand two hundred and threescore days." How long that mystic period means I know not, but there is a limit. And so the people of God, they are to be brought into sackcloth, brought into this morning, into this humiliation; "repentance," saith the apostle, "toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." I will not hold that godly sorrow is any part of salvation, but no soul is saved without it. I will not hold even that faith is any part of our salvation, but no soul is saved without it; it is sure to accompany salvation. I will not hold that my love to the Lord (and he knows I do love him with all my heart, and strength, and soul) is any part of my salvation, but only an effect of that salvation. "We love him because he first loved us;" but unless this salvation take hold of us and convince us of our state, bring us to this repentance, and bring us to this faith, and to this reconciliation, we cannot be saved. And have you not observed this variety in ministers?

You will find a minister sometimes very conflicting, and he seems to have a subject that leads him to cut up everything, but still with profit. Another time you will find him led solemnly into the deeps of human depravity, in order to hold the glass to every man's face, and to open up what a poor creature he is by nature; and a poor sinner will go away and say, "I never thought that sin was half so bad as it is; I never thought that I was in one thousandth part such a dreadful condition as this; but I now see it in the light of God's word; I know that I am in this miserable state. Oh, then, if I am saved, it must be by grace." Then the minister describes what repentance is, and what faith is, and what love is, what godly sorrow is, what groaning's are, what sighing's are, the evidences of life in the soul. Is there any difficulty in understanding this parable-for a parable it is- is there any difficulty in understanding that the red means the conflict, and that the black means these two things, our state by nature, and that mourning and lamentation into which we must be brought? It is this house of mourning that prepares us for the house of feasting.

Then come the white horses; you see the complete contrast. The black horses come first, conviction first, broken-heartedness first, self-despair first, self-humiliation first, mourning first, and then come the pure white horses. Why do we thus have white? To represent our perfection in Christ: there we are as the morning, in contrast to the black night; there we are fair as the moon, and in contrast to the tents of Kedar; there we are clear as the sun, in contrast to the clouds of Sinai; there we are terrible to the adversary as an army with banners, in contrast to the state of thralldom we are in by nature. Here, then, is our completeness in Christ. The black comes first, and the white afterwards. This is just how I have been led all my life in preaching. Whenever the Lord has led me to preach some mourning sermons, then I mount the white horse afterwards, and come in with what you are in Christ; complete in him, approved in him, accepted in him, victorious in him, holy in him, righteous in him, safe in him, happy in him, delighted in him, everything in him. Then we can mount the white horse; then we can follow him with those we read of in the 19th of the Revelation: "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses." We can follow him only by virtue of his atoning blood; we can follow him only by his own righteousness. I could not follow him from his being holy were it not that his blood cleanses me from all sin, and there is his attraction, and he is my sanctification. I could not follow him merely from his being righteous were it not that his righteousness is imputed to him that believeth. Thus, then, the black represent our state by nature, that godly sorrow into which we must be brought, in order that the ground might be prepared for the word of the Lord to take root and bring forth fruit; and then the white horses represent what we have in Christ-the victory, the liberty, the glory, which the dear Saviour hath wrought. Now both the black and the white horses it is said go toward the north.

Then after the red, the black, and the white, come the grisled and the bay the old Christian-Well, old friend, how do you get on? Is it all white? No, not all perfection, except in Christ. Is it all black? No, no, a little white sometimes. Is it all red-all conflict, all suffering? No, no, a sort of grisled and bay; that is what it is. And, brother, do you live in the north, under the law? No, I have left the north long ago. "Flee from this land of the north, deliver thyself, O Zion that dwells in the north, and come to the south." "Turn our captivity, as streams in the south," that is, gospel streams, that make the soul fertile, that make the soul like a well of living water, spring up into everlasting life. Grisled and bay-a mixture of things; faith and unbelief, hardness and softness, light and darkness, good thoughts and bad thoughts, spirituality and carnality, earthly and heavenly, devilish and divine, sensual and spiritual-a mixture. But by-and-bye the soul will leave this cottage of clay, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of Christ upon the white horse of eternal perfection and of eternal victory. Grisled and bay, they dwell in the south. There are some birds of passage that take care to avoid every summer never live anywhere where there is summer; there are other birds that take care to avoid every winter, they will never live where there is winter. So there are some professors that take care to avoid the gospel; if you were to tell them that the winter is past, that Christ has done everything, nothing left for them to do, and that the rain is over and

gone nothing but fine weather to come; they would not hear it; off they go to the north, to the law, to their duties and their doings; they like the winter they avoid the summer all they can. I happen to be one of those chilly ones that I avoid the winter all I can; it is warm in the love of God and in the gospel of God, and under the healing rays of the Sun of righteousness. Thus, then, I take the grisled and the bay to represent that chequered scene of things that every old pilgrim well understands, and the longer he lives the greater the mixture seems; the longer he lives the more he feels that vanity is stamped upon all, and that he prizes the truth of God and the grace of God more and more.

Secondly, I notice what we are mystically to understand by the north. I think the north in our text will mean five things, and I will just name them. First the world; a cold, freezing, foggy, barren, stormy world, a very good representation. The world is a scene of winter to the Christian. You may accept the world in the providential gifts that the Lord is pleased to bestow upon you and bless him for his goodness; but the world will not be your home; it will be a wintry scene of things. We have many troubles to meet with here, but it will be all right by-and-bye, and so it is now in God's account. And if I had nothing more to fret about than the passing frowns of a few mortals, I should have very little trouble. My chief concern is to have the joy of the Lord's presence. Well, then, we are to come out of the north. These ministers, represented by the black and the white, come to lead us out of the world; they are not of the world. There are scriptures very like this in the last chapter of Isaiah: "They shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites"-that is, for ministers, which he does-"saith the Lord. For as the new heaven and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." And the apostle, in the 15th of Romans, saith, "Ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost;" and the Holy Ghost never sanctifies but by the gospel of God, not by the gospel of men. The north, therefore, first means the world, so I take it. Second, the law of God; and we are to be brought from that. Third, systems of error: we are to be brought from these. Fourth, tribulation; and fifth, death. I think all these things are fairly implied by the north; and the business of the gospel is to bring us out of the world, to bring us from under the law, and to bring us out of error, and out of trouble, and by-and-bye out of the grave.

But lastly, the quietude of the Spirit: "Behold, these that go toward the North Country have quieted my spirit in the north country." First, by bringing in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is satisfied with that; well pleased for his righteousness sake. Nothing else can quite the Spirit of God but the bringing in of Christ Jesus; bring in what you may, there is nothing can satisfy God's Spirit but the Christ of God; with that Christ the Holy Spirit is satisfied. "Quieted my spirit". The Father is well pleased; the Saviour himself sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. And thus, then, if we take the north here to mean the law and its curse, under which we all are by nature,-these ministers, pointing out our state by nature, then pointing out what we are in Christ, God is satisfied, there we are reconciled, there he doth not impute our trespasses unto us, he has imputed them to his dear Son. That is one thing that quiets God's Spirit, the bringing in of Christ as the way or reconciliation to himself; there he rests in his love, and there we are to rest also. Second, God's Spirit being quieted means also deliverance from Babylon. God will never rest content while he sees one of his children severed from him, which we all by nature are. He will not allow one to be severed from him, and he will never be satisfied till they are all with him. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring." "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." He will never rest while there is one severed from him. Let them be

placed wherever they may, his eyes and his heart are upon them. When they are all brought to him, reconciled to him, and all his children are about him, then his Spirit will be quieted so far, but not before. Third, his Spirit will not be quieted as long as you have anything to hope in or to trust in but his grace and his mercy, till your faith shall stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. All the trials you have are to beat you off from all fleshly confidences; for as long as the Lord sees you have a thread of self-righteousness, a grain of creature holiness, or anything good of your own, something to boast of, his Spirit will not rest, but will so deal with you as to spoil the whole, that no flesh should glory in his presence. And what is this but the work of the minister, to so guide the people, the little ones, the inquirers, as to bring them off from all false confidences that their confidence may be in the Lord alone. Then the Lord will be quiet; his Spirit will be quiet; the gospel will quiet his Spirit. So he thus takes them as the eagle above the reach of the earth; so "the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Lastly, take the North Country to mean death itself, and God's Spirit in that fourth sense will never be quieted, nor yours either, until you rise from the dead. But when the gospel goes on so far as to call you out of the grave at the last great day, and the Saviour shall have you all ranged at his right hand, presenting you unreprouable, unblamable in his sight, then his Spirit will be quieted, and yours will be quieted, and eternal quietude must then reign.

Thus, then, what difficulty is therein understanding this? You can understand the meaning of the red, the white, the black, the grisled, and bay; you can understand what is meant by the north, and the people being brought out from it; you can understand the fourfold sense, out of the many respects which may be named, in which the Lord's Spirit is quieted first, in bringing in Christ as the end of the law; second, bringing his people out of the world; third, bringing them off from all false confidences; and fourth, bringing them out of the grave, when the last tear shall be wiped away from every face.