

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

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RIGHT DIRECTION.

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A Sermon

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, 14TH AUGUST, 1870.

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“Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”—ZACHARIAH ix. 12.

THE Lord has not only made provision for eternal salvation, but he has undertaken to make way for the coming in of that provision. It is indeed a solemn truth that not a soul of all Adam's race would seek that divine direction which he gives in salvation matters, nor seek that provision which he has made, if he himself did not undertake to make them do so. I shall at once, then, proceed to notice the language of our text in a threefold form. First, *the objects addressed*,—prisoners of hope. Secondly, *the direction given*,—“Turn you to the stronghold.” Thirdly, *the promise made*.

Now, who are these prisoners of hope? Not the man who is without Christ, and content to be without Christ; not the man who is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenant of promise, and content to remain so; not the man who is without God and godliness, and content to remain so; not the man that is thus without hope, without any true hope. He is indeed a prisoner in the worst, or almost the worst, sense of the word, but he is not the object here addressed. And if it be said, But are not all invited? If they were all invited, as men call it, in the sense here intended, they would then all come; for when the Lord speaks in the gospel sense of the word, he speaks just as he spoke to the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley, and not a bone was left behind; just as he spoke to Lazarus in the grave, and just as he will speak to our bodies at the last great day. Therefore, if we are the objects addressed, we shall be sure to follow the direction here given, and appreciate the promise here made. Let me, then, describe carefully the persons who are thus addressed. They are said to be “prisoners of hope.”

They are persons, then, that the Lord hath taken captive by his word, under a conviction of what they are, and they feel that they are shut up and cannot come forth out of the condition in which they are. Hence that beautiful description given in Psalm lxxix., where you read that the Lord heareth the groaning of the prisoner, and preserveth them that are appointed unto death. Therefore the person here addressed is one that feels that by his sin he is appointed unto death, and that he has nothing by which he can reverse that sentence; the person here addressed is one that feels that by the law of God he is sentenced to death, and that he has nothing by which he can meet that law or reverse that sentence. Thus the Lord hears the sighing of the prisoner, and preserveth, not destroyeth, them that are in their own eyes and their own feelings appointed unto death.

Some of you, that are got perhaps only thus far, to be convinced simply of this truth I have stated, I will tell you that that conviction, connected with a concern for your eternal welfare, if put into one scale and properly appreciated, is of more value to you than all the silver and gold of the world, could you possess the same; because this conviction of your being thus a prisoner is nothing else but the beginning of that work of grace in your heart which the Lord will carry on until it shall be perfected in eternal glory. Then again, you find in Psalm cii., "The Lord hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose those that are appointed to death." You may feel at present as though you have no evidence whatever that the Lord has answered or will answer your prayers, but he will. Mark the language, then. These are prisoners; they feel that they are shut up, and cannot come forth. They are led to see what they never saw before—that there is something to come forth to; that there is a life, and light, peace, pardon, and liberty to be realised; and they are thus taken by the power of God, brought into a knowledge of what they are, and are kept in that prison just as long as the Lord seeth good; he knows how to deal with us in this matter. And if you should be so shut up, and in prison, and cannot call the Lord yours,—if it should be so all your days,—if that should be the Lord's will concerning you, there stands the promise to meet you at the end of it, and it will entirely accord with our text,—“To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” And you will observe that where this conviction is, where we feel that we are shut up, and cannot get out from what we are as sinners, nor from God's law, nor from the curse, nor from anything we are, by anything we can do, just see how such persons are prepared to receive the gospel. How

true are the words that "the preparation of the heart in man," as well as "the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." If, therefore, there be a good ground, hearer, where the word takes root, and we bring forth fruit, it is the Lord himself that has made the good ground by quickening the soul, by softening the heart, and bringing the man into soul trouble. And just see how such persons are prepared for the mission of the dear Saviour. How beautiful his words are: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek." If you have a true experience, it will embody this one feeling; it will make what the blood of Christ can do unto you good tidings. Hence in connection with our text,—“By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water.” “Good tidings unto the meek;” so that you will be glad to hear that sin is put away and pardoned: the glorious truths of the gospel will be to you good tidings. And the prophet, personating the Saviour, seems to increase in emphasis as he goes on: “He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted.” What is a broken heart? Why, a man whose spirit is broken down from all creature confidence, and he feels he is in a desolate, solitary state. Here I am apparently, he saith, without grace, without Christ, without God, and I fear there is no hope. But there is hope; all such are prisoners of hope, and that hope is a sure hope. “He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted;” and by and by, when he shall say to all that holds you in bondage, “Loose him and let him go,” then your broken-heartedness will depart, and you will be happy beyond all description. “To proclaim liberty to the captives,” and of course that liberty is by the atonement of Christ; “and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” If you look at these four, you will see they all come by the atonement of Christ;—good tidings unto the meek by Jesus Christ; binding up the broken-hearted by Jesus Christ; he maketh up all breaches and healeth all wounds; and to set the prisoner free, or loose the captive; it is by Jesus Christ that our captivity is turned; “the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God;” his vengeance against all that that would hold us in bondage; “to comfort all that mourn.” Now these are the persons addressed. And I feel an increasing interest in dwelling upon this part of the work of the Holy Spirit; because there is through the Scriptures so very, very much emphasis laid upon spiritual poverty. We see this all through the Psalms; how much does the Psalmist say of the spiritually poor; and when he speaks of the goodness of the Lord, he says, “Thou, Lord, of thy goodness hast prepared for the poor;”

again we read, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and a poor people;" and again, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him;" and "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It is an unspeakable mercy, then, to know our spiritual poverty, and for the heart to be thus prepared to receive the great truths of the everlasting gospel.

Secondly, I notice *the direction given*;—"turn you to the stronghold." What is this stronghold? God himself is the stronghold; I cannot be wrong in that,—that he is the stronghold to which we are to turn. Therefore those of you that do thus know your poverty will be able to follow me in all I have to say upon the second department. It will be for me here very carefully to point out how God is a stronghold thus for a poor sinner. First, then, in the putting away of sin; that is the first aspect I shall name of the way in which God is a stronghold. I shall have to run in substance over the experience I have already described, but it will not be grievous to me, and be quite safe for you, in describing how God himself is our stronghold. The words stand thus:—"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." We have fallen by our sin in Adam, we have fallen by our personal sins, and we fall every day of our lives in our hearts and in our old nature. If we get up into a little spirituality, down we go again; if we get up into a little communion with God, down we go again; and if the sermon is blessed to you, and you seem lifted up above your ordinary darkness and bondage, there is some unbelief, or worldly mindedness, or thought, or something, that will come and pull you down again. The wise man saith that "the just man falleth seven times a day;" I sometimes fancy I fall seventy times seven. I can set my seal to this, that my old nature drags me down; and how true it is that "no man can keep alive his own soul." David felt this when he said, "Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of my head." What are we to do? Why, he saith, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." What words am I to take? I will take these words;—"Take away all iniquity." God the Father did that when he took away all our sins from us, and imputed them to his dear Son; so our prayer is that that should be done manifestly which God the Father has done in eternal counsel. This is a part of the counsel of God, to take away all iniquity, to take every particle of the sins of the people from them, and to put the Saviour, in counsel, purpose, and prediction, under the law for them, and under their sin for them, and thus holding and viewing them in what the Saviour is, so that he will not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel. What

stronghold the blessed God is here, if you are enabled to cast the anchor of your hope on the promise of God by Christ Jesus ;—it is a hope “both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” And I may just say that the counsel of God is immutable ; he does not forgive you, and then blame you again ; he has taken sin away, and laid it upon his dear Son, and he is immutable in this counsel. Then secondly, the Lord Jesus Christ hath atoningly and sacrificially taken away all sin. I feel a great desire that you should increase in your acquaintance with this simple but very great truth. The apostle embodies this when he saith, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” Now, sin was condemned to death in him ; his death was the legal death of every one of the sins of the Lord’s people ; he thus took away their legal force and power, so that they have not power now to say a word against us. So, on the ground of his having done so it is said, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” This is the way in which the blessed God is a stronghold. And let you have what you may in yourself—besetments and trials—here is the remedy, unless you mean to set the power of your sin above the power of the Saviour, the power of the infidelity which you feel in your heart above the omnipotency of Christ ;—why, then I can say nothing. But, bless the Lord, you will not do that ; you will believe that Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. So to turn to this stronghold is to understand his truth, to receive the same, to look to him and seek him, and beg and pray of the Lord that he will bring home in his own time the word with power to enable you to lay hold of the same, and to rejoice in this glorious freedom. And wherever the experience is real, there will be a renunciation of all confidence in the flesh. Hence it goes on, “So will we render the calves of our lips ;” we will give praise unto thy dear name. I love to live with a God that I can praise and love ; I love to live with a God that loves me infinitely more than I can ever love him ; I love to live with a God that never had an evil thought of me, and never will. “I know the thoughts I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Now mark, “Asshur shall not save us,” that is, the Jews would go to strong nations around them ; “Asshur,” meaning historically Assyria, “shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses.” Let us take these two clauses to represent earthly powers. Oh, my hearer, with delight I say it, that our eternal welfare depends neither in whole nor in part upon any earthly power, “Not by might, nor by power, but

by my Spirit, saith the Lord." And mark in what spirit and strength the mighty mountain is defied. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." Now, mark, it is "by my Spirit;" and the very headstone is to be brought forth by grace; our confidence is to be there. Earthly powers shall not save us; "neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." You must remember, brethren, that the people of God in their desolate sort of experiences are spoken of as orphans. When the Saviour saith, "I will not leave you comfortless," the original word translated "comfortless" literally is, "I will not leave you orphans." So "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Say you, As a sinner God is not my Father, he is my Judge: and however my earthly parents may pray for me, which they will if they are Christians, still my salvation must come entirely from the Lord. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Then, when he brings us into fellowship with himself; we can rejoice that he hath adopted us, and is our God and our portion for ever. Thus, then, he is a stronghold by sin being thus all taken away. I cannot describe the blessedness of being brought into this state. But does any one say, Shall I be received? Well, I can repeat only what I have said before; if you see your need, and receive the testimony of the way in which he is the stronghold, and hold it fast, and seek the Lord by it, you will find him. But don't you see, if we do not seek the Lord by his truth we shall never find him? You may seek him by Catholicism, but you will not find him; you may seek him by duty faith, and free will, and ceremonies, but you will not find him. The Pharisee sought the Lord by his own works, but he did not find him; but the Publican sought the Lord by his mercy, and found him. And of the Jews, that sought the Lord by their traditions, and partly by the law,—what saith the apostle? "They have not attained unto righteousness;" they did not find the Lord; the Lord mocked at their fear, laughed at their calamity; they called, but he would not answer, because they received not the love of the truth. "But the Gentiles, which followed not after the law of righteousness," knowing there was no such thing, it is following after a shadow, "have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;" they have received God's blessed truth, and thereby found him; he became their stronghold then, and so he is now. What a blessed testimony; then, is this of what his poor people are as poor prisoners, of the way in which he is a stronghold. We ought not to pay the least attention to what our fellow dying worms may say about these truths; if our eyes are opened to see our need of them, and have been led to

receive them, we ought to be bold as lions, and we shall, too, if we abide faithfully by these truths; we shall realize that truth in Micah v., "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest;" and all ungodly men are the beasts of the forest; "as a young lion among the flocks of goats," as the margin reads it; "who, if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." So the Lord saith, "Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off." This may seem, perhaps, a little defiant, but you will at once perceive that our text is a kind of warlike text; here is a stronghold, here is a tower, here is a fortress, and a fortress that cannot be shaken; God is our strong tower, our fortress, our refuge, our stronghold; and when we thus see him on our side, we may defy the enemy and everything. I should like to be able to rise to this now and then; it is very pleasant when we can take our stand upon the rock of eternal truth, and feel that by thus putting away all sin our God is our stronghold. Take away this blessed order of things, and let our sin come in, then indeed there is nothing but darkness, death, and despair.

But in the next place, he is a stronghold also in his loving-kindness. Hear what he saith of those persons that thus turn to him where all sin is put away, "I will heal their backsliding;" that is, their apostasy. Divines and many people say that backsliding is one thing and apostasy another; and they laugh at me because I cannot distinguish between backsliding and apostasy, and they say, The man is a fool; I suppose they mean that for an argument, but it has not the weight of an argument with me. To backslide is to go back, and to apostatize is to go back; and what difference there is between going back and going back I do not know. The original word translated "apostasy" means to shuffle off and run back, and backsliding means to go back; and therefore backsliding means to go back, and apostasy means to go go back; and I really do not know the difference myself between going back and going back. You may call it running back, or backsliding, or sliding back; it is going back, take it whichever way you may. Now the Lord says, I will put an end to this, and you shall not go back any more; nor have I either, ever since the Lord brought me experimentally into these truths. He has fulfilled that promise, "I will heal their backsliding." The Latin renders that "Curabo aversionem eorum;" "I will heal their aversion." There shall be no more enmity, no more antipathy, no more going back. And God is my witness,—it is now more than forty years since he united my soul to himself in this eternal order of things, and I have never gone back from his truth from that day to this, and never shall. Job, what do you say, "His

way have I kept, and not declined ; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips ;” he commanded me to believe, and I have believed ever since ; “ I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food ;” and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold ; and so he did, and so will you, whatever trials you are in, because you have had a faithful heart in those trials to hold fast his truth, that your faith may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall afresh be revealed ; then all will be well. But if in trouble you backslide, apostatise, and give up the truth, and the Lord come and find you, having been a professed friend, turn round and become a real enemy, he says, “ Why, how is this ?—you professed to love me, but you have turned into enmity ;” and now he cannot say, “ Well done thou good and faithful servant ;” but he will cast such out. Now, “ I will heal their backsliding,” their aversion, their enmity ; and they shall go back no more. They have turned to the Lord, where all sin is put away. We can say to Satan, and the world, and Pharisees, “ With all our weakness and ignorance we are not so far gone as to turn for one moment away from the atonement that has turned all our sins away, that has turned God’s anger, and every curse, and adversary, and adversity away, and that will at last wipe away all tears from off all faces. Those that are brought into this stronghold gain the victory ; they shall stand upon the vantage ground of victory ; for God is their strong tower, their fortress ; therefore that fortress must stand safe for ever. “ I will love them freely ; for mine anger is turned away from him,”—from that poor man that has turned to me, where sin is put away, by faith in my dear Son. But then that man does not think thine anger is turned away, Lord. I know he does not think so, but it is ; and by and by I will show him that it is so ; and I will seal home upon his soul this immutable oath that I have sworn ; I have entered into an immutable oath that I will not be wrath with thee nor rebuke thee. That is the man that becomes a true servant of God ; that is the man who says, when he hears the voice, “ Who will go for us ?” “ Here am I, send me.” Thus, then, the Lord will heal their apostasy ; put a stop to their going back. “ I will also be as the dew unto Israel.” Look at that ; look at the difference between the dew and the consuming fire. “ He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. See the mighty cedar, rooted broad and deep : will that cedar run away from its place ? No :—so shall it be with the saints ;—they shall take deep root. The devil, the Pope, the priest, the prison, the torture, and all the powers of earth and hell may lay hold of that solitary man, and try to root him up, but they cannot ; they may burn his body to ashes, but they shall not move his soul ; for “ they

that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." These are they to whom the blessed God is a stronghold. Well might Nahum say, "the Lord is good." There he views God as a stronghold by his goodness. The Lord is good unto us as manifested in and by Christ Jesus; and, having given us such a Saviour, and entering into such engagements, he is "a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knoweth them that trust in him." He knows whether you are a Pharisee, or a poor, destitute, solitary, trembling sinner.

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on thee."

Lastly upon this part: he is a stronghold by the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the Saviour's kingdom is that that cannot be moved. What does that mean? The kingdom includes two things—the state of things and the people; so you cannot move the state of things, and you cannot move the people; the kingdom shall not be left to other people; the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess it for ever and ever. Let us take Micah's definition of this. I am led to Micah because in that same chapter he represents the Lord as a stronghold. "In the last days it shall come to pass,"—the days of the gospel dispensation are the last days; there are no days to succeed these; Christ's days are for ever, the days of the Lord's people are for ever. There were to be days that should succeed the Jewish days; hence the end of their dispensation is called the latter days, because it was drawing to the end of their dispensation; and then, when these Christian days were brought in, they are the last days; there never will be any more. "In the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills: and people shall flow unto it." Divines have brought in their cloudy, humanly fabricated myth of a nothing of a millennium, and swallowed up half the Scriptures pretty well to build it up; they have fetched some of our materials to build their house with, and we must fetch them back again, and show they belong to us. Now here the mountain of the Lord's house is to be established in the top of the mountains. What are in Micah iv. called mountains are in Revelation xxi. called foundations: there is Jerusalem with her foundations, and these foundations have in them the names of the apostles of the Lamb, to teach us that those foundations are nothing else but the testimonies of the holy apostles and prophets: as it is written, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Therefore the mountains here will mean the testimonies of God's word. Why are they called

mountains? Because of their stability and because they are elevating. When a promise comes, it lifts you up very high sometimes. Therefore what are in one place called mountains—the testimonies of the prophets and apostles—are in another place called foundations; and the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of these foundations, these mountains, these eternal testimonies; and if these testimonies, which are the foundations, be destroyed, what shall the righteous do? "And it shall be exalted above the hills." Now, if you see two hills together, and one is larger than the other, you would not call the little one a mountain and the larger one a hill, but you would call the larger the mountain and the lesser you would call the hill. Therefore these hills represent our sins; as it is written in Amos, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine;" that is, these blessed testimonies shall testify of the blood of Christ; "and all the hills shall melt." The mountains are larger than the hills, and so the testimonies of God's mercy are larger than our sins. All the hills of our sins shall melt away before the efficacious blood of Emmanuel. These glorious testimonies shall thus drop this sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. So that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of these testimonies, and exalted above the hills. Thus one prophet shows that the people of God shall have a standing above their sins, and the other prophet shows that the sins shall all melt away. The Canaanites shall melt away, and our sins shall melt away; the sins of Israel may be sought for, but there shall be none. "I will pardon those whom I reserve." "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope;" nowhere else to look to but to that God where all sin is taken away, who is a God of everlasting love, and establishes an everlasting kingdom that ruleth over all;—a kingdom that cannot be moved. Let us go on till we come to the stronghold. "People shall flow unto it;"—to this kingdom, based upon these eternal foundations. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up,—I will read it just as you would read it in the Hebrew,—“Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the interposer of Jacob;” there you get self-existence and interposition. “And he will teach us of his ways;” he will show us his way of loving us, and redeeming us, and calling us, and forming us, and strengthening us, and making us happy, and glorifying us; “and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth out of Zion,” the law of life, for there is no death in Zion; in Zion the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore; and out of Zion goes forth the law of faith, “He that believeth hath everlasting life;” “and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;” not the literal Jerusalem which is in bondage, but the Jerusalem which is above, which is

free. And so it has been fulfilled ; the people have been attracted ; the Lord has taught them to walk in his paths, and they have the law of Zion, the law of faith, and the word of the Lord, which is a word of reconciliation, reconciling us to everything we have to meet ; whatever trouble we may have, if the Lord is pleased to speak a word it is all well. Is it well with the child, well with the husband ? Yes. Well, but the child is dead. It is all well, all the same for that ; and so it was. " 'Tis with the righteous well." But we will go on till we come to this stronghold. " And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off." Say some, That has not been fulfilled yet. Yes it has, friends ; for what are these strong nations ? Well, I was one of them, and you were one of them, —strong in enmity against God. Saul of Tarsus was strong in fleshly confidence, in murderous enmity against God ; but Jesus Christ shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off. " Why persecutest thou me ?" he brings the sinner down, the sinner loses all his strength, becomes a poor weak creature ; there he lies at the footstool of mercy ; " God be merciful to me a sinner." What, are you willing to be saved by grace ? Yes. Are you willing to look to Christ, and rest in him ? Yes ; but he will not have me, for I am such a sinner. That is the very man he will have. Will you fight against him any more ? Oh no, I will go to work directly ; I will beat my sword into a ploughshare—no more fighting against God ; and my spear into a pruning hook ; I am going to plough now, it shall be all peaceful work now, and I will never learn war any more. " Nation shall not lift up sword against nation." That is not a promise to the world ; it is a promise to the church. The Old Testament church was called a nation, and the New Testament church is called a nation, and we do not fight against the Old Testament church, we are in entire harmony with it ; there was a time when we did fight against it, but we do not now. Ruth was not a Jewess, but she became a friend of God ; Rahab was not a Jewess, but she became a friend of God. It is a promise to the church, not to the world. The potsherd of the earth will go on striving one with another, which shall get the highest place upon the mole-hill, as long as time shall last ; like brutes they live, and like brutes they die ; they know nothing better, and so they go on. If mankind in general were educated into something a little more in accordance with their standing as citizens, they would not act as they do. If the two armies now facing each other had got their right senses, when they met they would have grounded arms, and one army would have said to the other, Now we have nothing against you, and you have nothing against us. These two governments cannot agree, and now we will both of us unite, and if these two govern-

ments, the Prussian and the French, do not make peace, we will just overturn them, and put somebody into their place that will make peace. If they had done this, the two Governments would have been frightened out of their shoes pretty well, and have been glad enough to make an end to their quarrel directly. They do not know what they are fighting for, any more than a good many know what they are fighting against, when fighting against God. Therefore it is a promise to the church; they shall enter into everlasting peace, and shall never again quarrel with the God of their salvation; the friendship is made up for ever. "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." Say you, But how long will this state last? Just as long as you live; and how long is that? For ever. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God"—there it is to the end of time, you see; but "we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." Then the prophet, after a few more words, breaks out,—“And thou, O tower of the flock,”—the blessed God himself is the tower of the flock,—“the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion;” Christ hath the first dominion, our God hath the first dominion. Men have their plans and wars, but then they can move only as far as the great God is pleased to suffer them to move; he hath the first dominion; he governs first, he throws his plan in first, and then, when their plans come in collision with his, down they go; but the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever: and his thoughts unto all generations. He is the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, that hath the first dominion. And what shall be one of the consequences? “The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.” What can hinder it? “Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, thy king cometh unto thee;” and if the king comes, he brings the kingdom with him; you cannot separate Christ from the kingdom. So God becometh the stronghold of the people.

Lastly, *the promise made*: “even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.” What day is this? I believe this day, while it may mean the day of eternity, should be looked at in the light of Christ. You recollect in Psalm cxviii,—“This is the day”—surely that is Jesus; he is the end of darkness,—“which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it.” So “even to-day,” this gospel day, in and by Christ Jesus, “will I render double unto thee.” I never could get a better thought yet to explain the word “double”—though I know it means abundance—than that of sufficient grace here and glory hereafter; I think that is the double. In Isaiah xl., when the Lord telleth us how he comforts the people, he says, “her warfare is accomplished.”