

FEEDING ON THE WORD.

NO. 2278

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
OCTOBER 16TH 1392,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 8TH 1890.

“Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”-Isaiah 55:2.

How important it is that we should hear God, that we should have an attentive ear to his Word; and that it should, through our ears, reach our souls, and become to us, consciously, the living Word of the living God! The great gate of commerce between heaven and the town of Mansoul, is Ear-Gate. We can see but little of the things of the kingdom; but we can hear much concerning them.

We are told, not only to “hearken” to God, but to “hearken diligently.” You cannot have too much hearing of the right kind of truth, nor too much of the right kind of hearing. Some people like few sermons, and those very short; but, when a soul is hungry after God and eternal life, it puts another meaning on this exhortation, “Hearken diligently.” It cannot hear too much; it cannot hear too often; it cannot hear too intensely. Faith comes by hearing; and hence, Satan tries to block up that gateway of mercy. If he can persuade men not to hear, then he can keep them out of the way of grace; but the exhortation of our text sets wide open this door of salvation, at which the Lord himself stands and cries, “Hearken diligently unto me.”

You, dear friends, love to hear the Word of the Lord; therefore, I need not dwell upon that exhortation; but I do pray that no one may hear in vain.

“Take heed what ye hear,” and “take heed how ye hear.” Do not be content merely to open Ear-Gate; but rest not satisfied until the King himself comes riding through that gate right up to the very citadel of the town of Mansoul, and takes possession of the castle of your heart.

With this brief introduction, we will come to the consideration of our main text, which follows upon the exhortation. We are to “hearken diligently” to this message from the Lord’s lips,” Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Here are four things; first, the food; next, the feeding; then, the welcome; and lastly, the delight.

I. First, here is FOOD: “Eat ye that which is good.”

I ask about this food, first, How is it presented to us? It is presented to us freely. The invitation is, “Come and eat.” There was a word about buying; but, as I said in the reading, that was soon covered up with, “Buy without money and without price.” Others are trying to get salvation by their own efforts. The rich man spends his money; the poor man spends his labor; but both of these ways come from self, and they mean self-salvation-every man his own saviour. This is not the method to which you are called; you are, indeed, put off that way. “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” You are called simply to hear, that your souls may live; and, having heard, you are bidden freely to partake of that which is good, and that which is rich, which God has provided. We need still to say that the grace of God is free. No merit is asked, nothing to fit you for its reception, nothing as a compensation to God for the gift of it. Grace is free as the air you breathe. Eternal salvation comes without a penny of cost to every hungry, needy, bankrupt soul that is willing to receive it.

Further, while it is thus presented freely as to any labor with which to procure it, it is also presented freely as to its quality, its highest quality. You are not permitted to drink freely of water, and then to purchase wine. You are not invited to come and eat freely that which is good, and then to spend your labor for that which is fat. No, the richest dainties of God’s house are as free as the bread he gives to hungry souls. You think that you will be highly favored if you are allowed to partake of the crumbs that fall under the table, and so indeed you will be; but the daintiest morsels on the table are as free to you as those crumbs. Sanctification is as much a gift of God as justification; and the highest perfection in heaven is as much the gift of grace as the first cry of, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” It is all

graciously given; and you are invited to come, not only to the waters, but to drink wine and milk, to eat that which is good, and to delight yourselves in fatness.

This royal bounty is freely given; and freely given to the most undeserving. The only limitation is no limitation at all: "Ho, every one that thirsteth!" All of you who are dissatisfied, or discontented, who have not obtained what you wanted; who are longing for something, you hardly know what it is you do long for; you who have a thirst insatiable but yet indescribable, who came here to-night saying, "I wish I had it; others that I know have it; I hardly know what it is that they have; but oh, that I might have it!"-you will find out what it is when you have received it. You hardly know yet what the taste of wine and milk may be. You hardly know yet what the fat things full of marrow, that are part of Christ's great gospel feast, can possibly be. You shall know them by-and by; but, be you who you may, come and welcome; sinner, come. If thou hast nothing, Christ is everything. Though thou art unworthy, he is infinitely worthy; and so he presents to thee food to-night on the freest possible terms; or, indeed, without any terms or conditions at all, for he puts it thus, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

I ask, next, What is this food? I answer, first, it is the Word of God. The soul can never feed to the satisfying of the understanding, the conscience, the heart, except upon divinely-revealed truth. Thou must know what God would have thee know. Therefore attend, and hearken diligently, that the God-breathed truth may become nutriment to thy spirit.

Better still, the food is the Incarnate Word of God; for Christ Jesus, the Son of man, the Son of God, is the Word. If men feed on him, they shall find that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Remember his own words, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This is God's Bread given to you, his Only-begotten Son, clothed in human flesh, living and dying for the sons of men. Happy are they who feed on this heavenly manna.

What is this bread? Well, it is the grace of God. As you read this chapter through, you find that the Lord refers first to his Word, and bids you hear it. Next, he speaks of his Son, whom he has given to be a witness to his

people. Further on, he magnifies his grace, and speaks of wonderful changes which that grace works in those to whom it is given. Oh, how satisfying is the grace of God! “He giveth more grace.” We live upon grace; it is our daily bread, grace for every trial, grace for every duty, grace for every sin, and grace for every grace. “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” This is the food for you. Thirsty with sin, thy sin is quenched with grace. May God grant us grace to feed upon grace, to live upon his Word, and to feast upon his Son!

I ask yet another question, What is the nature of this food? It is good; it is good, in every sense of the word “good.” It is satisfying. It is pure; no harm can ever come by eating it. This heavenly food is good, and good for you, good for you to-night, good for you at any time, good for you living, good for you dying. All other foods that men seek after are unsubstantial; they can surfeit, but they cannot satisfy; they can cloy, but they cannot content; but the food that has come down from heaven, if a man does but take it into himself, shall be the best food he ever ate.

Moreover, this food is described here as being fatness: “Let thy soul delight itself in fatness.” Within the Word of God, there are certain choicer truths; in Christ, there are certain choicer joys; in grace, there are certain choicer experiences than men at first realize. It is not merely bread and food, but it is marrow and fatness. There are “tit-bits” for the Lord’s children. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” “In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” I hope that, before we have done to-night, we shall have introduced some poor soul to the fatness, the choice, special parts of God’s most holy Word. It is not lean meat that God gives you, not scrapings from a bone; but he feeds us royally, he gives us of the best he has, and plenty of it. “He daily loadeth us with benefits.” He gives us meat to eat of which even angels do not know.

*“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace, and dying love.”*

These things are our soul’s daily nourishment.

II. But now, secondly, here is FEEDING. One of the most important words in our text is that little word eat: “Eat ye: eat ye.”

Food is of no use until it is eaten; and here, often, is the crucial question with seeking souls. "I see that Christ is the Bread of life that I want; but how am I to eat him?" Well, now, really, you ought not to need any instruction on this point. We take a great many orphans into the Orphanage, and some of them are very ignorant, and we have to teach them a great many things; but we have no class for teaching them to eat. They all know how to do that, and to do it pretty heartily, too. If men were hungry, they would know how to eat, if they had the bread. It is because men are not really hungry on account of sin that they come and ask us, "What do you mean by this eating?" Yet it may be that some are sincere in asking the question, so I will answer it.

To eat is, first, to believe. To "eat" a truth, you must believe it to be true. To "eat" Christ, you must believe him to be the Christ of God. To "eat" the grace of God, you must believe it to be "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation."

*“Artful doubts and reasonings be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree.”*

I will gladly lend you a nail or two, and the use of a hammer as well, for I like not these doubts. They are in the air like midges; they fly about everywhere, and certain brethren endeavor to multiply the pests. But, oh, that you, poor sinner, would have done with doubts, and simply believe! Believe what is certainly true, for God cannot lie, and what he reveals is infallibly sure. Believe it.

Well, after you have done that, to eat is chiefly to appropriate. A man takes a piece of bread into his hand; but he has not eaten it till he has put it into his mouth, and swallowed it, and it has gone down into the secret parts of his very self, and has become his very own. When a thing is eaten and digested, it cannot be restored.

You may take away my house; you may take away my money; but you cannot take away from me yesterday's dinner. You must take Christ in the same way that you eat your food; that is, appropriate him. Say, "He is mine; I take him to be wholly mine. This Christ, this grace, this pardon, this salvation, I believe it; and I now trust in it, rest in it, appropriate it, and take it to be my own." "Suppose that I should make a mistake in taking it," says one. Nobody ever did. If thou canst take it, God has given it to thee. If thou hast grace to grasp Christ, though thou thinkest thyself a thief in

doing so, there is no roguery in it. What God sets before thee, take, and ask no questions. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a soul is enabled to feed upon the Word of God, to feed upon the Christ of God, to feed upon the grace of God! You cannot do wrong in so doing. It is written, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This is to eat,-to appropriate.

But after you have eaten, you know, the full process of eating includes digestion. How do I digest the Word of God? I know what it is to read, and mark, and learn it; but how do I inwardly digest it? When thou dost meditate upon it. Oh, what a blessed work is that of sacred meditation, turning the truth over and over and over in the mind, throwing it into the winepress of memory, and treading it out with the feet of thought, till the ruby juice flows out, and thou dost drink thereof, and art satisfied! Meditate upon the Word; think much of what God has done for thee. Think over his thoughts; turn over his words; and thus thy soul will grow strong.

Feeding also means trusting yourself wholly to Christ. The man who eats his breakfast, goes about his business trusting to the strength which that morning's meal will give him; and when noontide comes, and he feels faint, he eats again, without a doubt that what he eats will nourish him; and he goes back to his work, and uses muscle and sinew, trusting his food to supply him with power. It is just the same with Christ. Take him, and believe that he will help thee to go about thy business, to bear thy trouble, to meet thine adversary, to serve without weariness, and to run without fainting. This is to eat that which is good; it is to take freely into thine own self Christ, his grace, his Word, and to live thereon, that thou mayest grow thereby.

I should like to make this plain to all of you; but I cannot make it any plainer than this. You have Christ before you; take him. "Oh, but I am not fit," says one. A man who is very hungry might say that he is not "fit" for dinner; but, if he is a sensible man, he just falls to and eats. So let it be with you; whatever your unfitness may be, you are welcomed by the invitations of this chapter. Come along with you; enter the banquet-hall at once, and feed to the full.

III. My third head is WELCOME. What does the Lord say? "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Do you see, here is, first, no stint? “Eat, eat, eat, eat, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” It is not said, “Here is a pair of scales; here is a plate; here is a knife. The law allows so many ounces of meat to you, just so much, and you must not have half-anounce over.” Nothing of the kind. You are just taken to the table, and the exhortation is, “Eat to your heart’s content. Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” There is no stint.

As there is no stint, so there is no reserve. It is not said, “Now you may eat those two things; but you must not touch that nice fat morsel over there; that is for Joseph; that is for the particular favourite, not for you.” No, poor soul, when God invites you to his table, you may have anything there is on the table. No matter though it be eternal life, though it be communion with Christ, though it be immutable love, thou mayest eat it. Take it, take it; for thou art not called hero to sit, as they used to have it, “below the salt”, among the inferior folk; you are called to sit at the table like any of the princes, and the great King himself says, “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

So, too, there is no end to the feast. “Eat; keep on eating. Delight yourself in fatness; keep on delighting yourself in fatness. You will never use it all up.” I read of a country once, though I hardly believed the description of it; for it was said that the grass grew faster than the cows could eat it. Well, there is a country that I know of, where the grass grows faster than the sheep can eat it. You may eat all you will out of the divine Word; but you will find that there is more left than you have taken; and it seems as if there were more after you had taken it, as if the grass grew deeper as you fed more ravenously upon it. You will find it so. God puts no reserve as to time. In the morning, feed on his Word; at noontide, drink to strengthen thy life out of the Sacred Scriptures; and at night, feed thy heart, yet again, upon thy evening portion.

I want to talk to you a little about this feeding, and especially in reference to the fatness of divine truth. There are some of God’s people who do not live upon the richer meats of his Word. Poor souls, some of them never get a taste of them. Perhaps they attend a ministry where the richer meat is never brought out. The “clods and stickings” of the gospel they will get; but not the prime joints, not the best parts of the gospel. Well, well, if that is all that their ministers have to give them, it is well that they should give them that; but if any man has learned by experience to feed upon the deep things of God, and the meat that sustains the soul, let him not fail to put it

in due season upon the children's table. Why, some of you dare not make a good meal on the doctrine of election! If you did, you would find it to contain "fat things full of marrow." The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, the doctrine of the immutable love of God, the doctrine of the union of the believer with Christ, the doctrine of the eternal purpose that can never fail-why, I have seen many a child of God sniff at these things! Well, well, well, we must not find fault with them. Babes, of course, do not like meat. Poor creatures, they have not teeth enough yet to bite meat, and we must give them milk. Only let not the babes kick at us who can eat meat. We must eat the strong meat, for it is the very food of our souls.

Different foods are for different growths of grace; but it is a pity that the children of God should habitually neglect the richer joints of the gospel. There are some of them who measure themselves by others. I do believe that some of God's people are afraid of being too holy, which fear need never haunt them much. Some of them are afraid of being too happy, because they know a dear soul, who is a kind of weather-glass to them, and she is not very often happy, and so they are afraid that they must not be. How many a person has set up Mr. Little-Faith to be his model, or Mr. Ready-to-Halt, with his crutches, to be a kind of pattern to him! Now, Ready-to-Halt was a very sensible man; he would not advise other people to use crutches. They were good for him; but he wished that he had never wanted them. So is it with a mournful child of God, there are some of the best who are of a sorrowful spirit; but I would not recommend you to be like them. If that man on the other side of the table dares not eat the marrow and fatness, that is no reason why you should not have your share if you can enjoy it.

There are some people (I will not judge them), who always want to know, when they come to God's feast, how little food will be sufficient, what is the minimum upon which a person could live. Dear, dear, I never tried that plan; and I do not recommend you to go to-night, and consult a doctor to know what is the smallest amount of food upon which a man could live. There are, I fear, a good many of you working out that problem with regard to your souls. You say, "Well, now, do you not think that one sermon on Sunday is quite enough?" Then, there is the prayer-meeting, and you say, "It is only a prayer-meeting; we shall not go to that." So you go from Sunday to Sunday, sometimes, you one-sermon-a-week people, and you say, "I feel unhappy; I have many doubts and fears." I should think you have. If you had only one meal a week, you would feel a little hollow here

and there; and if you only get one spiritual meal a week, it is no wonder that you are weakly. The text says, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It does not put to you that strange proposition of trying how little spiritual food you can live upon.

There are others, who are very sincere, who always ask how much they may take. May I take a promise? Poor soul that I am, may I dare to call Jesus mine? Why, I am the very lowest of the people of God, may I dare to think about everlasting love? When you go to a feast, the question is not what you are, but what the host is; and, if he has spread the table, and invited you, make no "bones" about it, as men say, but eat what he sets before you. Ah, dear hearts! if we had not more than we deserved, we should not even be alive in the land of mercy. Everything that God gives is of grace, not of merit, not of desert; therefore, unworthy though thou be, take it.

"Oh! but," says one, "I am afraid of being presumptuous." Oh, yes, I know! There are a great many who are afraid of presumption, and they make a mistake about what presumption is. I think I told you, one day, of two little boys, to whom their mother said, "Now, John and Thomas, I shall take you out next Monday for a day's holiday." Well, it was Thursday or Friday, and one of them began to talk about it with all his might: "I am going out for a holiday next Monday; I know I am; I am going out for a holiday next Monday." His little brother was "afraid to presume"; so he said that he thought, perhaps, he might go out for a holiday next Monday, but he was afraid to presume. The other little fellow, when he got up on Saturday morning, said, "Mother, is it Monday yet?" and he was as happy as a lark with the idea that the Monday must come very soon. Now, which of the two was presumptuous? I do not think that the boy who believed his mother's promise was presumptuous; I think that he was a good, humble, believing child; but I think that the other boy, who argued, "Well, you see, mother cannot afford to take us out; perhaps it will be wet; and mother, perhaps, will not keep her word; she will forget it." I say, he was presumptuous, and did not deserve to go at all. You who doubt are vastly more presumptuous than you would be if you would simply believe.

Let me encourage you, dear friends, to put in practice my text, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Feed your souls on precious truth. Do not say, "Oh, that is high doctrine!" My dear friend, you have no business to call doctrine high or low. If it is in God's Word,

believe it, and live upon it. “Oh, but those are deep things!” Some people even say that they are “Calvinistic.” Never mind if they are; they will not hurt you. I am of the mind of the old lady who said, when she heard a certain preacher, “I like to hear that kind of minister, he is a high Calvary preacher.” That was a good mistake to make; I would like to be a “high Calvary preacher”; and preach up Jesus Christ and him crucified with all my might. Do not be afraid to feed on anything that Christ is, or did, or promised. Fall to with a glorious appetite, “and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” If there are any high enjoyments, raptures, ecstasies, delights, if you lose yourself in heaven begun below, if you can feel the Lord very near you, well, be ready to dance for joy. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

But as to holy exercises, such as prayer, and prayer continued, prayer strong and mighty, and such as praise, too, that is akin to the music of heaven, do not hold back from them. Go in for them with all your might. “Let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Oh, our poor starveling services, our weak, impotent drawings near to God! May we be delivered from them, and may we get into the marrow and fatness of real communion with the Most High!

Above all, do not neglect to feed on what you have not yet received, but what is yours in the hand of Christ. On the glory yet to be revealed, on the glories of the Second Advent, especially, often dwell; and let your hearts take fire as you think of them, and let your spirit grow strong with an intense delight, because HE is coming. He is coming quickly; and who knows when he may appear? Live upon the promise of his coming, and rejoice therein. “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

IV. Now, my time has gone, and therefore I will not preach upon the fourth head, which was to have been DELIGHT; but I will just say these few words on this part of my theme.

There is no peril in holy joy, in delighting yourself in God’s Word, and delighting yourself in Christ. You may be as happy as ever you can be, and there will be no danger in it: for “the joy of the Lord is your strength.” The joy of the Lord is your safety; the joy of the Lord will be your restoration, if you have wandered away from him.

There will be no idleness, or selfishness, produced by this fat feeding. The more you feed on God's Word, the more you will work for the good of others. You will not say, "I am saved, and therefore I will let others perish." Oh, no! You will have an intense, burning desire to bring others in to feed upon "free grace and dying love." There are none who love the souls of men so much as those who love their Lord much. When they have themselves had much forgiven, and they know it, they go and seek their fellow-sinners, and try to bring them to the Savior's feet.

Dear friends, may you get such meals upon the rich things of the Word of God that you may come to a sacred contentment, till you shall not say, like Esau, "I have enough," but shall say, like Jacob, "I have all things"! May you be unable to wish for anything more! May you be so complete in Christ, so fully supplied in him, that you can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"!

May you also attain to a sense of holy security; not of carnal security, for that is dangerous; that is ruinous; but holy security, so that you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "Of what persuasion are you?" said one man to another. "Of what persuasion am I? I am of this persuasion, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." This is a blessed persuasion. May you have it, and keep it all your days!

Then, next, may you come into a state of perfect rest! "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." "We that have believed do enter into rest." "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." But there is a rest which they enjoy even now; may you get it!

May you also come into a state of complete resignation to the will of God! If we sang with our hearts that beautiful hymn (Number 691) just now, we are able to leave everything with God, and let him do what he likes with us. May you just feel that your will is what God's will would have it to be, and that God's will shall be your will! Then you will let your soul delight itself in fatness.

Lastly, may you be filled with a happy expectancy! May you be able to say with our poet,-

*“My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”*

Oh, to live in the suburbs of heaven, to get into the vestibule of God’s great palace, and to stop there, and hear the singing of the seraphim inside the walls! There is such a thing as feeling, on the Hill Beulah, the breezes from the distant Celestial City. When the wind sets the right way, you may often smell the spices of the glory-land where Emmanuel is King, and his beloved lie in his bosom for ever. I pray that you may all have this. Do not say, “We cannot.” Do not fear that you cannot, but rather listen to the text, and carry it out, “Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

Oh, that some poor soul would get his first mouthful of Christ tonight! Take him. I have seen a hungry child sent by his mother to the baker’s. There is a little piece of bread put in as a “makeweight”, and the poor child eats it on the way home. I give you leave to do that to-night. Carry the truth away with you, and keep it; but eat a bit as you go home. Lay hold on Christ to-night, now, before you leave the Tabernacle. May his grace enable you to do it; and then sit down, and eat, and eat, and eat for ever of this precious, inexhaustible provision of God’s infinite love; and to him shall be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C.H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 55.

To-night we shall read that precious chapter of gospel invitation, the fifty-fifth of Isaiah, which, I hope, you all know by heart.

Verse 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth,*

God would have the attention of sinners; he calls for it. Are not sinners eager for God? Oh, no! It is God who is eager for sinners; and so he calleth “Ho!” Men pass by with their ears full of the world’s tumult; and God calleth, again and again, “Ho! Ho!” Be you rich or poor, learned or illiterate, if you are in need, and specially if you feel your need, “Ho, every one that thirsteth.”

1. *Come ye to the waters,*

There are only in one place waters that can quench your thirst; and God calls you that way: "Come ye to the waters."

1. *And he that hath no money;*

Water is a thing that is sold, not given away, in the East; and he that needs it, must buy it. But he who buys of God, has nothing to pay: "He that hath no money."

1. *Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

See how God's good things grow as we look at them. The first invitation was, "Come ye to the waters;" the next was, "Eat;" but this one speaks of "wine and milk." Our first idea of the gospel is very simple, it is water for our thirst. Soon we find that it is food for our hunger. Presently we discover it to be wine for our delight, and milk for our perpetual sustenance. There is everything in Christ; and you want him. Come and have him. There is no other preparation needed but that you feel your need of him.

*"This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."*

What a cheering verse this is to begin with!

2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?*

If you spend your money for that which is not bread, you are likely to be disappointed. "Oh, but," you say, "I have made many an effort." Yes, I know you have; but, if you labor for "that which satisfieth not", I do not wonder that you are not satisfied. Let your past defeats drive you to your God. If you have failed hitherto, so much the more reason why you should listen to the Lord's message. He says to you,-

2. *Hearken diligently unto me,*

Salvation comes through the ear, more than through the eye. Hearken; hearken; hearken diligently, with both your ears, with all your heart, hearken unto your God.

2. *And eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

If we will hear, and will believe, we shall be satisfied; we shall be delighted; we shall be overjoyed. The Lord can take our thirst away, and give instead a delight in fatness.

3. *Incline your ear,*

Hold it near the mouth of the gracious Speaker. Be willing to hear what God has to say. Take out that wool of prejudice that has prevented you from hearkening to God's voice: "Incline your ear."

3. *And come unto me hear, and your soul shall live; and I will wake an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

"When thus you live, I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I am not the God of the dead, but of the living; and when once, through hearing the divine Word, you have come to life, I will be your God."

4. *Behold, I have given him*

One greater than David, even the Beloved of the Lord, the Only-begotten, the Messiah Prince, the King of kings, even Jesus.

4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

God did not give us an angel to lead us, but he gave us his Son; and he did not merely give us his Son to be an example, but to die for us, to bleed to death on our behalf, to be our Substitute, dying in our place and stead. "I have given him." This is the greatest wonder that ever was. "God so loved the world that he gave his Only-begotten Son;" not, "God so loved the saintly; God so loved the earnest; God so loved the moral;" but "the world", the common-place, sinful world; he so loved those who lay dead in trespasses and sins "that he gave his Only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the Father, in giving his Son, gives him a promise:-

5. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.*

So, brethren, the gospel must succeed. Christ must have whole nations to come to him; they must come; they shall come; for God has glorified his Son, and he glorifies him in this among other ways, in bringing nations to

his feet. The gospel is no experiment; there is not a question as to its success. There may be dark days just now, and our hearts may sink as we look around; but the Father will keep his promise to the Son, and that encourages us to look up in the darkest hour. This fact, which is more than a promise, will never be altered, "He hath glorified thee."

6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Oh, may the Holy Spirit make every word I read to be effectual with you! God himself speaks to you to-night, out of a Book which not only was inspired, but is inspired; and he says to-night, freshly from his own lip to you that have not rest of heart, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found." He may be found; therefore seek him. "Call ye upon him while he is near." He is near; therefore call upon him.

7. Let the wicked forsake his way,

Do not let him wait till he has finished this thing, or done the other, or till he has so much to bring in his hand. Let him run away from his old master, and from his old way, and from his old self at once. May God help him so to do!

7. And the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God,

Whom we love, and in whom we trust, and who has pardoned us: "to our God."

7. For he will abundantly pardon.

The marginal reading is, "He will multiply to pardon." He will pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, and pardon, ad infinitum. Enormous as the sin may be, God's pardon shall suffice to put it all away. Is this message too hard for you to believe? Oh, broken heart! does this divine truth seem to you to be too good to be true? Oh, trembling one! does it seem impossible that the righteous God can cast all your sins behind his back, and drown them in the depths of the sea? Listen still to our Lord's gracious words

9-11. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but

watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God's Word is not ineffectual. If thou wilt hear it, it will bless thee. When God sends snow and rain, they go not back again. The earth receives them; they sink into her pores; they refresh her secret life. Receive thou, O black heart, the Word of God, as the earth receives the snow! O thou dry heart, receive thou the Word as the dry ground receives the shower. It shall not go back again; it shall sink into thine inmost soul; it shall save thee. God can save thee. Believe it; receive his Word into thy heart, and it shall save thee. Mark who you are, who are spoken to in the first and second verses, you who are thirsty, you who have no money, you who have labored, and are disappointed with the fruit of your toil.

12. *For ye shall go out with joy,*

You poor people who are invited to come to the waters, you who have nothing of your own, "Ye shall go out with joy."

12. *And be led forth with peace:*

To some places you can "go" by yourselves; to others you must be "led"; but in either case you shall have "joy" and "peace."

12. *The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,*

They do not look like singing, do they? They look as if their only music would be the howling of the wild winds about their brow, or the roaring of the wild beasts along their sides; but for you, for you, ye thirsty ones, they shall break forth into singing.

12. *And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

Trees seem to have little sympathy with weary hearts; but when weary heads find peace with God in Christ, as I trust some will to-night, then even the trees of the field seem to be in harmony with man, and they clap their hands in jubilant exultation.

13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name,*

Yes, it shall make God's name great when you are converted; for you will talk about what the Lord has done for your soul, and that will bring God fame: "It shall be to the LORD for a name."

13. *For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

O ye that thirst, O ye hungry, O ye unsatisfied, may the reading of this Word be blessed to you to-night! Amen.