

WORDLESS PRAYERS HEARD IN HEAVEN.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD Will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” — Isaiah 41:17.

NOTICE, dear friends, that this double promise to the poor and needy stands in connection with other great promises which guarantee the gift of wonderful strength and blessing to God's people. These promises seem to me to be such as the mightiest servant of God might well desire to have fulfilled in himself. Look, for instance, at the one in the 15th and 16th verses: “Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt, thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.” What a great promise that is! How it makes the child of God to participate in the greatness of Jehovah's strength! The picture here drawn is a very remarkable one. Here is a man — a poor, feeble man — so strengthened by God. that he not only threshes wheat, but he threshes mountains; nor does he find that the gigantic enterprise is beyond the strength imparted to him. The rocks and the hills are turned to chaff; nor is that all that happens to them, for this

man, divinely strengthened, takes up a colossal winnowing fan, and sets Alps, Andes, Himalayas, flying just like the small dust from the threshing-floor. This is grand work, and it needs a man of God when he has come to the fullness of his strength through the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

Whenever we quote a great promise like that, it usually depresses some little one in the Lord's family. He (or, more likely, she) begins to say, "But what can I do? I cannot thresh mountains. Nay, rather, it seems to me that Satan's threshing me, and desiring to have me that he may sift me as wheat; and, instead of me holding the winnowing fan in my hand, it is the winnowing fan that is being used upon me, and what I thought was a fine heap of wheat is being blown away, and I am afraid there will be few precious grains left to lie upon the floor. Ah, me! Ah, me!" Well, now, our God has a gracious way of caring for all his children; and, from the very nature of him, I am quite certain that, if one of his children could be forgotten, it would not be the little one. You mothers know that, if ever there was one member of the household left out in the cold when you closed the door at night, it would not be the baby; you would be sure first of all to see that the wee mite was safely housed; and if it were possible that the divine mind could pass over and forget one of the beloved family, it certainly would not be the little one or the tried one. There are special promises for the child of God in the time of trial: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The presence of God is with all his chosen ones at all times; but if ever there could be an exception to that rule, it certainly would not be in the case of those who are tried, and troubled, and depressed. Nay; the exception would be all the other way. If the good! Shepherd left the ninety-and-nine safely folded in the wilderness, he would be sure to go after the one sheep that was lost, — the weak and wounded one, the feeble and footsore one, even though the [cause of its sufferings might be its own guilty wanderings. Oh, the splendor of the love of God! There is nothing to be compared with it under heaven, or even in heaven itself; it stands alone and unapproachable. He is ever considering those amongst his people who are downcast, and weak, and broken-hearted; and I think that the promise of our text specially comes in, not for you mountain-threshers, — not for you who are made so strong in the Lord, and in the Fewer of his might, but for some who cannot as yet get a grip of that grand word of his to which I have referred. Here comes in this

sweet promise; “when the poor and needy” are not trying to thresh mountains, but are looking for that which is needful for the supply of their own personal wants, — seeking water; when they are in too low a condition to be able to rise to the dignity of service, but are just like poor Hagar and Ishmael in the wilderness, seeking water; — when they have fallen into such a sad and sorrowful state of heart that, instead of testifying to the goodness of God, they cannot testify to anything, for “their tongue faileth for thirst;” — it is then, in their extremity, that the blessed promises shall come to them: “I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

I am going to follow the good Shepherd’s example, and to leave the ninety-and-nine, — you brethren and sisters who are happy and joyful in the Lord. I must leave you to take care of yourselves; or, rather, the Lord will take care of you. I want just now to go after that one sheep that is lost; and I should not wonder if there are not here more than one out of every hundred in the condition which our text describes. If so, may the Spirit of God cause the message to teach the hearts of all such sorrowing ones, that God may again be glorified in the abundance, of his mercy toward them. Let us begin at the beginning of the text, and consider it from point to point very briefly.

We will start with these people where the text starts with them.

I. Here is, first, POVERTY OF CONDITION: “When the poor and needy seek water.”

This description, of course, applies to poverty of spiritual condition; does it not describe you, my ‘brother, my sister? Sometimes, we say that we are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;” though, all the while, we are “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” but there are other times when, consciously, among the poor, we are the poorest; and among the needy, our need puts us in the very front rank.

Certainly, I think that most, of us here would take the position of great poverty *as to anything like merit*. What have we ever done that can commend us to God? When we have done all that our Master commanded, we must still say, “We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.’ But we have not obeyed all his Commands, by a very long way. Self-complacency may be a very pleasant feeling to cherish; but he who walks near to God is a stranger to it. If ever God honors one of his

children in public, I bear witness that he has a way of flogging him behind the door, so as to make him feel that he has nothing wherein glory, save only in the Lord. What hast even thou done, thou who hast won many souls for the Savior? Thou mayest thank God that he has thus honored thee; but beware lest thou dost ever take any credit for it to thyself, for that would be a strange perversion of the truth. What if thou hast trained up that family of thine in the fear of God, and hast seen the divine benediction resting upon thy house? That is Well; but art thou the god of thy house? What wouldst thou have been, and what would thy house have been, if it had not been for the mercy of God to thee and thine? Looking back upon the whole of our life, we have to thank God for it; and we must not let him be robbed of any of the thanksgiving that is due unto him; but as for ourselves, the only fit tribute to all that we have done is a tear. Let us thank God that he blots out our faults and our failings with the precious blood of his dear Son; but let us also weep ever thorn bitter tears of regret that we should ever have sinned against him. If any here present, have any merits in which they think they can glory, there are, on the other hand, some of us who could sit down in dust and ashes, and cry out in the agony of our souls, for we are poverty-stricken to the last degree as to anything of merit in and of ourselves.

Yes, and we have poverty of another kind, namely, as to *anything like strength*. Neff that we would plead that as an excuse for not doing much for our Lord; for, albeit that we are fully conscious of our own weakness, we never yet learnt that God's law was limited by human power. We believe that it is our duty to do thousands of things which, by reason of our impotence, we never do, and never, perhaps, can do. Still, the claims of duty remain the same as they always were; for, if we have sinned away our power, God has not therefore lost any of his rights. We ought to have been perfect. Brethren, I count that, if you and I had lived absolutely perfect lives, we should not even then have rendered a due return to God for the great debt we owe to him. If we have preached Christ's gospel, we ought to have preached it like flaming seraphs. If we have suffered for Christ's sake, we ought to have been ready to die like martyrs. We ought, in our lives, to have reproduced the life of Christ; but when we straggle to attain to this high ideal, there is a shrunken sinew that makes us like Jacob, halt upon our thigh; and there is another shrunken sinew that makes us drop our arm, and there is scarcely a part of our mental and spiritual constitution which does not make us cry, with Paul, "To will is present with me; but

how to perform, that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

Truly, we are poverty-stricken as to our strength. The smallest sin is too much for us if God be gone from us; the slightest temptation blows us over, like children who are weak upon their legs; only God can sustain us, and we need constantly to hear our Savior say to us, as he said to his disciples, “Without me ye can do nothing!” When we first heard that message, we used to think, “Oh! but stately we can do a little.” Yet, every day, that word “nothing” seems to toll the funeral knell of all self-confidence. Christ still says to us, “Without me ye can do nothing;” and we know that what he says is true. Some of us are feeling the truth of this sentence and we are humbled in the dust as we realize that we are indeed poor and needy as to strength.

Then, brethren, as *to grace*, many of the children of God are, to their shame, I obliged to confess that; they are poor and needy where they ought to be rich, and where, they might be rich; — poor in patience, poor in courage, poor in faith, poor in hope, poor in love, poor in private prayer, poor in public influence, poor in every way. Although the grace of God can make us so rich spiritually that we may be happy ourselves, and be able, also to be the means of blessing others, there are many of God’s children who seem scarcely to have a penny of spending-money, and they never appear to go to the King’s treasury, and dip their hand in, and take our great handfuls of the precious gold of grace. They might do so if they would; but, alas! they continue miserably poor through their own fault. So this last, confession must be made very humbly, as indeed the others I have! mentioned ought to be; and perhaps I am speaking right home to some brothers and sisters here when I say that, as to merit, as to strength, and even as to grace, you feel yourselves to *be* “*poor and needy.*”

II. Our next remark is concerning URGENCY OF NEED.

“When the poor and needy seek” — what? Money? No; that is only to be poor and needy. Bread? Ay; that shows a harder poverty than merely being “poor and needy.” But it is not bread that these poor and needy ones are seeking, but “water.” Why, that is generally to be had for nothing, — a drink of water. It must be very hard times indeed when poor souls are in such a state that they are longing for water, and seeking for it afar, as though there were none near at hand. Brothers, sisters, are any of you in such a condition, so poor and needy, that you are sighing after the living

water? Though you have drunk of it before, you are still sighing for more of it, and feel as if you could not tell where to find it.

This is an urgent necessity, *for it touches a vital point*. A man can exist without money, he can live without garments, he could live longer without bread than he could without water; for you may palliate hunger, but the pangs of thirst are awful; so those have said who have had to endure it on a raft at sea. Water is a vital necessity of our being, and therefore God has appended to it a feverishness, an agony, a burning, longing, and intense desire to obtain it. Thirst is something dreadful; are you, my brother, my sister, thirsting for God, for the living God? Are you crying to him, with David, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is?" Do you feel that you must get a visitation from God, or else your soul will die? Have you been in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, and have you come here saying, "Lord, I seek a draught — a necessary draught of living Water, and I want it to drink; but I am so poverty-stricken that I cannot buy it. I am so weak that I cannot go far to find it. I am so ignorant that I scarcely know where to look for it. Lord, I am brought to this point; it is not any fancied grace that I want, it is not some high-soaring aspiration after perfection that I cherish, but I need even grace enough to keep my faith alive. I want it just now, such a draught of water from the well as shall enable me to realize that I am a child of God?"

Do I address one in whom this vital necessity has become *an agonizing thirst*? I think that I shall speak your experience when I say that I have sometimes known what it was to feel that I would sacrifice my eyes, and be blind, if I might but, again get near my God. What mattered it that one, had to lie in bed and suffer, if one might but know that God's countenance was lifted up upon his soul, and that joy and gladness were in his spirit? They who have never lost the consciousness of fellowship with God are to be envied. May there be many such here! But, if any have once known it, and have lost it, I hope that they will be consumed by a vehement desire to have it back again, that they may once more drink of the water which is infinitely better than that in "the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate?" It were worth while that our blood were shed to get a draught of that living water again. It is truly sad when any child of God has sorrowfully to say,

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?”*

*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still.
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill.”*

Thank God that the void does ache, and that the world cannot; fill it. If you dear friend, have an agonizing desire to drink the water of life, you are the person to whom my text applies: “When the poor and needy seek water.”

Further, this is *an immediate necessity*. When a man’s tongue faileth for thirst, and he seeks water, he wants it at once. When he is perishing for lack of water, he is not content if someone tells him that he shall find it by-and-by; he wants to find it at once. “*Water! Water!*” he cries; “give me water;” but as long as a man can cry as loudly as I have just done, he can wait a little while; but if he gets to this point, that his tongue faileth for thirst, then he needs it immediately, or he will die. O child of God, if you have lost the presence of your God, you want to find it again while you are in that pew; you would not like to go home without having a sight of your Father’s face, would you? And if you are in such a desperate state that you feel that you must have it, then you shall have it, depend upon it. I pray that you may be brought to such a condition that you shall be ready to die of sickness of heart unless your hope be speedily fulfilled, and you can once again behold your God.

III. The third step down — and it is a very long one, is this, DISAPPOINTMENT OF HOPE: “When the poor and needy seek water, *and there is none.*”

Ah! “there is none” *even where they have found it before*. They have sought it in the right place, they have gone where they used to go, where there are wells of water; yet they are bitterly disappointed, for “there is none.” Have not some of you at times found it so in attending the means of grace? You have gone again to the same place where, aforesaid, your heart was refreshed as you drank deep draughts of the living water; you listened to the same preacher whom you heard there before; and, perhaps, to others there was as much sweetness as ever in his message, but to you there was none. Does not the preacher himself know what it is, sometimes, to have a

subject that is just like a springing well; and then, at another time, to find that he may pump as long as he pleases, but there is not a drop of water comes? If it is so with the preacher, it is certainly so with the hearers. Sometimes, there is an unction from the Holy One resting upon the Word, so that it is like the ointment from the alabaster box, the heavenly perfume fills the whole house. At another time, it is the same truth that is preached, and by the same lips; and, possibly, with the same earnest desire for a blessing; yet the blessing is not given. "The wind bloweth" not only "where it listeth," but as it listeth; and there are times when not a breath of the heavenly breeze stirs the still air; and then, when "the poor and needy seek water" even where they used to find it, "there is none."

It makes their case even more disappointing when they have, side by side with them, *others who are seeking water, and finding it*, yet "there is none" for them. Have you never been to the Lord's table, — say, with your own wife, — and when she has been going home, she has said, "Oh, what a precious communion service! Was not the Lord manifestly among his people in the breaking of bread?" — and you have hardly liked to tell her that you have not seen the Lord even! in his own ordinance? Your eyes have been holden, you have been sitting there sighing and crying, and no joy has come to you. I am sure it is often so in the hearing of the Word; it is so in the private reading of the Scriptures; it is so in all those means of grace which God does bless to his people. We find him sometimes blessing one, and missing others; just as, sometimes, the rains are partial, one piece of ground is rained upon, and another piece, close by, is not rained upon. Thus it comes to pass that, where others drink deep draughts, you poor and needy ones come seeking water," and there is none."

"“ And there is none.” Of course, if you go to places where there is none of the living water, why, then, you have only yourself to blame when you cannot find it! If you go where the modern divinity is taught, if you go where you hear the new doctrines, you will find no water of life there. "There is none." That stream has been dried up long ago; the Sirocco of doubt has swept across it, and it has vanished, and there is nothing left but the dry bed of the river. People who go constantly to hear that kind of teaching must not blame the Lord, or complain, if they seek water and find none. When a bucket has the bottom out, and the well has long since ceased to hold any water, if you go there again for it, you will simply find that "there is none." But the pain of it is that, sometimes, the earnest child of God frequents a ministry which God has formerly blessed to him, and

has also blessed to others, yet he turns away sorrowfully from the well which has yielded him no water, and he says, “there is none.” God is showing him the emptiness of the creature, the vanity of all mortal help. Be has a great and a wise design in it all, and it may be that he will keep his child in that condition for a long time, as poor and needy, seeking water, and finding none.

IV. Fourthly, we have here THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER: “and their tongue faileth for thirst.”

‘They cannot speak; *they cannot tell their fellow-Christians about their trouble*: “their tongue faileth for thirst.” They are ashamed to tell others what they feel. It is a sad state for any to be in, yet many are in it, and knowing that they are guilty, and that it is their own fault that they have fallen so low, they cannot tell their fellow-Christians anything about their condition, and so they miss one very useful means of comfort. And their tongue so faileth for thirst that now, if a hymn is given out, they feel as if they must not sing it. If there is a promise quoted, they feel as if they could not appropriate it; and sometimes the prayer of a joyous brother seems to shoot over their head, they cannot attain to his experience. Ay, “their tongue faileth for thirst.” They do not know how to express what they feel.

If they were called upon *to state their own feelings and convictions before the living God*, it may be that they have become so mournful and sad that they could not describe themselves. Indeed, this is one of the painful parts of some men’s condition, that it is indescribable. If they could only put it down in black and white, they might hope to get over it; but it is mysterious, singular, strange, unaccountable. They have fallen into such a queer condition; they have got down so low, that “their tongue faileth for thirst.”

Now I think we have gone about as low as we can. Here is a man who, to begin with, is poor and needy. Here is a man who is wanting water, who has sought, it, but who cannot find it. Here is a man whose tongue is so parched with thirst that he cannot now say a single word, he must sit down in sorrowful silence.

V. Yet, strange to say, now is the time that he learns that SALVATION IS OF GOD.

Look again at the text; it says, "I the Lord will hear them." What? Why, they cannot speak: "their tongue faileth for thirst." Yet it says here, "I the Lord will hear them." Well, but their tongue faileth them. Ay, but he says it, "I the Lord will hear them." So that brings me to this point, that God's great object, in bringing his people down so low as this, is to *make them pray directly to himself*; — that now they may not seek any water, but just cry to him who is the fountain of living waters, — that now they may not tell their friends about their need, nor even tell it to themselves but just, in the very silence of their soul, speak with God, for there is a kind of speech which is perfectly consistent with silence, — the speech of sorrow, — the exhibition of the wounds of misery, — the opening up of the brokenness of the heart, — the setting before God, not in eloquent descriptions, but in indescribable revelation, the intolerable want which lies within the soul. God means you, dear friend, to turn fight to him. The text does not even say that they pray; because, sometimes, even prayer becomes a mechanical act, and we are apt to rely upon it for comfort, instead of upon our God. So the Lord says that he will hear them, though there is no mention of prayer, and they feel that they cannot pray. You feel, perhaps, as if you could not pray; well, then, now turn yourself to God, rest yourself on God. You feel that all is over with you, that your case is desperate; then, roll yourself upon the living God. This is the point to which he means to bring you; so do not let even your desire to pray be an obstacle between the Lord and your soul. If you cannot utter a word, pray in this sense, — that your very heart, with unutterable groanings, pours itself out like water before the living God. This is where he would have us come; and, oftentimes, it needs all this bursting of the tempest, all this sorrow, all this grief, before the Lord can get us really to speak with him, not in words, but from our very soul.

The prayer which is hidden away in the texts — for, although there is no mention of prayer in it, yet it is hidden away there, — is *the prayer of inward thirst*. You know that it is useless to say to a man who is in distress of soul, "*You must groan every morning, and you must groan every night.*" No, no; he groans when he cannot help it; and though I wish that all would have their special seasons for prayer, yet I do believe that the most mighty prayer in the world is that which cannot be timed, or regulated, but which comes out because the suppliant must pray. "Oh, God!" There may be more real prayer in that ejaculation, when it is forced out of you by the overwhelming sense of your need, than there is when you put yourself into

a comfortable position, and kneel down to pray; for sometimes, you may get up from that posture and say to yourself, "There, I think I prayed very well;" yet, all the while, there may not have been any true prayer in it. But when, at another time, you say, "O Lord, I cannot pray; I feel as if I could not pray;" — why, dear man, you are praying! You are praying with all your might. There is more prayer, oftentimes, in that sense of not being able to pray than there is in the Pharisaic thought of having discharged the holy duty acceptably; for, in the one case, it is the soul speaking by the Holy Spirit; and, in the other case, it may be nothing more than the lips speaking into the air.

This is *the prayer of one who despairs of all means*. I wish I could drive every sinner into that corner, so that he would understand that, as no Popish priest can save him, and as no good works can save him, so no sermon-hearing can save him, no Bible-reading can save him, no praying can save him, nothing that he can do can save him; but he must get to God, and cast himself upon Christ, or else he will be lost. To many of you I might say, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, but ye will not, come to Christ that ye might have life;" for that is where the true life lies, in Christ, not in the Scriptures, blessed as they are. I hope that no one will mistake my meaning, for I am only putting the Scriptures as the Lord Jesus Christ put them when he was speaking to the Jews; but I desire to put the actual coming to Christ higher than anything else that is possible to you. Get away from all metres, and just feel it." Now they are all gone, and I will go to God, and say, 'O God, if thou dost not help me, whence shall I be helped? Neither the barn-floor nor the winepress can help me now; there is a famine in Samaria; I am fain to eat up even the fruit of my own soul, yet it cannot, satisfy me; I must go to thee, my Father, for all around me I see husks which swine may eat, but I cannot. I must have thee.'"

Notice, also, dear friends, that this is the *prayer of faintness*: "their tongue faileth for thirst." Oh, what blessed prayer comes out of a heart that faints away on the bosom of Christ! What powerful pleading there is in that very act! It is abject weakness making the most mighty appeal it can to almighty love. "There, Lord, there is nothing more that I can do. There is no hope for me, in heaven or on earth, apart from thee. Now, if I perish, I perish; but wilt thou — and thou — let me die?" No, he cannot and he will not let us die, for now comes the step upwards. You have taken one already in that silent heart-prayer.

Now comes *the declaration of God*: “I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Is it not something that God hears you? I think that I have frequently had to explain this word by speaking of the poor woman who was so pleased to see her minister. She was very poor, and so was her minister; what good, then, did he do her? Did he speak to her a very comforting word? No. The good man did not happen, that day, to be in much of a mood to do so, yet he did that sister a deal of good, she said. Why? Because he let her talk, and she just told out all her trouble, and he looked sympathetic, for that is how he felt, and that was just what she wanted. She wanted somebody who would listen to her. It is wonderfully condescending on God’s part to listen to us. Many of our complaints are only rubbish, yet he hears them patiently. Sometimes when people begin groaning and grumbling, I wish I was down the next street; but God is so patient, and long-suffering, that he hears all that his people say. Oh, what things you and I have had to tell him! We did not like to tell anybody else, but we have felt that we must reveal it to him; and we have done so very faintly and feebly, yet there he has been listening to us: “I the Lord will hear them.”

You know, dear friends, that you *have only to get a hearing from God*, and I you know what the consequence will be when your Heavenly Father knoweth what things you have need of. He only needs to know, and he will surely supply all that you lack. So when you have got a hearing from God, you have got everything. There it is in our text: “I the Lord will hear them.” We say that God is “a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.” That is quite true, but it is not a Biblical expression. David said, “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” It is enough for him to hear it. If he hears it, he will be quite certain to be moved with compassion, and to come to the help of his child. It is all well with you, my brother, it is all well with you, my sister, though you cannot pray to God in words. Only exhibit your wounds, let their poor dumb mouths plead for you. They have pleaded; God has heard them he will answer you. You shall yet come up out of the dungeon, and from this time forth he will fulfill the promise, “I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

You know what work: God had with Jacob that night when the angel wrestled with him. The trouble with Jacob was that he was so terribly strong, and the chief work that had to be done upon him was to make him weak. The angel wrestled with him, and he wrestled with the angel. He was a strong fellow, yet he never prevailed by his strength; and he would

not have prevailed had not the angel touched him, so that his sinew shrank, and down he went; then, as he fell, he still clung to the angel and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." That fall of his won the day; it was the lame Jacob who took the prey. It is the God of Israel, also, who will bless you, but he must first touch you, and make the sinew shrink. You must be nothing and nobody before God will help you. I have observed that, whenever God has given success to my own preaching, I have had a time of sore soul-trouble either before it or afterwards. I have noticed that some brethren, who have suddenly come to the front, and have apparently been very useful, have generally become top-heavy if the press has not abused them, or if they have not had some trying affliction, and you hear the sad news concerning them that they have gone astray. But when God ballasts the ship well, — when he takes down the topsails, — when he makes the vessel have a trial trip in stormy weather, then he is often pleased to put many of his saints on board such a ship as that. So, brother, be thankful if you are a tried man, and believe that God is going to bless you. Be thankful, brethren, if you have had an experience of this horrible thirst, — if your tongue has been made to cleave to the roof of your mouth in anguish of ungratified desire after God. If you have been ground to pieces, like fine flour in the mill, now may you be offered unto God. If you have been slain, now may you be a sacrifice unto the Most High. But there must be the sentence of death in yourselves; there must be a breaking, and a grinding, and a tearing, or else it is not likely that there will be the sweet shining of Jehovah's face, and perpetual joy and peace.

I have been all this while trying to fish; I wonder whether, by God's grace, I have caught the one for whom my hook was baited. Is there anybody here who has not any good thing in himself at all? Is there any poor wretch, who feels that he is only fit to be swept up by the devil with a broom, and to be cast into the fire? Is that how you feel, — as if you were the offscouring of all things, and in your own esteem not worthy for God to tread on, — such a thing as never should have been in existence; and, being here, ought to be put out of existence as soon as possible? O thou nothing, Christ is willing to be thine All-in-all! O thou naked one, here is a garment to cover thee! O thou hungry one, here is food for thee! My Lord seeks after you who are downtrodden, you who lie on the dunghill, forked out and ready to be spread on the field as if you were only so much manure. Still he calls you; come, and trust him. You have nothing else to trust to; you have no other refuge, so fly to Christ. Fall down before your God, fall flat on your face,

man, and then, when the great shell bursts, which you are now dreading, not a fragment of it shall strike you. Your safety lies in casting yourself upon the mercy and grace of God. Say, “*It must be mercy, great mercy, nothing but mercy, that can meet my case. I am a lost, ruined, undone sinner; but I believe in the great love, grace, and mercy of God in the person of his dear Son; and now down I fall, trusting in Jesus crucified.*” You are a saved man if there lives one. Trust thou thus in Jesus, and thou hast, in that very act, passed from death unto life. Therefore, go thy way in peace. The Lord, that killed thee, hath made thee alive. The Lord, that wounded thee, hath healed thee. May his blessing abide upon every one of you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ZECHARIAH 12:10-14; AND, 13:1, 2.

Zechariah 12:10. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications:*

This is a promise concerning Israel. Long have the Jews rejected the Christ, but the day is coming when they shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah. In that day, this promise will be fulfilled. God must always give “the spirit of grace” ere men will pray aright; and wherever grace is given, there is always true prayer.

10. *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

Discovering that they have rejected the true Messiah, they will be overcome with the most acute grief that was ever endured, grief altogether inconceivable.

11. *In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*

One of the greatest mournings that was ever known was that when Josiah was lain in battle, and the people lamented that their best of kings was so early taken away from them. Such shall be the sorrow that shall fall upon repenting Israel.

12. *And the land shalt mourn, every family apart;*

There shall be universal mourning throughout the whole land; yet it shall be special and particular to each household: “every family apart.”

12-14. *“The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.*

True repentance is the distinct act of each individual. It cannot as a rule be performed in the mass. There is a general repentance which, like that of the Ninevites, has a special excellence about it, because it affects a whole city or nation; but that is not the kind of repentance which is described here. In this case, the sharpness of personal conviction of sin cuts and wounds the conscience of each individual, and there is a bitter cry uttered by each one as if he were the only sinner in the world. Oh, how sincerely you and I would repent if we felt as if we were the only ones who had ever broken God’s law; yet such a repentance as that we must feel if we would be personally forgiven.

Zechariah 13:1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.*

They shall see their pardon when they have truly seen their sin. When once the foulness of their transgression is perceived, then the fountain of cleansing shall be perceived, too. No man ever knows the preciousness of the God-given remedy till he has felt the force of the terrible disease. No one by faith plunges into the crystal fount of perfect cleansing without first lamenting the filthiness which needs to be removed.

2. *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

Where there is pardon, there is sure to be sanctification. The idols must fallen and the false prophets must go. We cannot have our sins and have a Savior too. If we have Christ to blot out our sin, we must have the same Christ, to remove sin as to its authority, and power, and dominion over us.