

FAINTING.

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“He giveth power to the faint.” — Isaiah 40:29.

THE connection in which these words stand is very suggestive. The previous verse says, “Hast thou not known, Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, findeth not, neither is weary! There is no searching of his understanding.” He has the perfection of power and also of wisdom. Unbelief is based upon absurdity, but faith rests upon reason and fact. This may not at first sight seem to be true, but it really is so. To believe in the almighty and all-wise God, is the most rational thing in the world; and to disbelieve him, is both the most wicked and the most irrational thing. When a child of God begins to distrust his Father, it must be because he doubts either God’s memory or his power. It seems utterly absurd, as well as grievously wrong, to suspect the Lord of fainting or being weary; the moment we give utterance to such a sentiment, we feel as if we must at once withdraw the words. It is so altogether ridiculous and absurd to speak thus of him, who made the heavens and the earth, and who supports all things by the word of his power. How can he fail or faint? The self-existent One, from whom all the power that ever was, or is, or shall be, must primarily come, how can he fail or faint, Then would the sun grow dim at noon; then would earth dissolve, and heaven pass away, if once faintness could seize the Deity who supports all things. We know better, and we ought, therefore, to act better;

and as we feel that he cannot faint or be weary, we ought not to harbor a single doubt concerning his fainting. How can he faint? It is he that, giveth power to the faint. When faintness comes anywhere, it does not come to him, it comes to you who doubt. You are like a reeling man who thinks that it is the earth that reels; or like a person travelling in a train who, for the moment, forgets that he is moving, and thinks that the trees and hedges are all swiftly rushing by him. It is not God who changes; it is you who have changed. It is not he that is weary; it is you that are weary. It is not he that is faint; it is you that are fainting; and here comes in this blessed truth for your encouragement, that you may be revived from this faintness, instead of himself fainting, God “giveth power to the faint.”

I. First, I will endeavor to answer the question, WHAT MAKES US FAINT?

We will first consider the case of the awakened sinner, the man who does not know that he is saved, and who, perhaps, is not yet converted. But he is, to some extent, under the gracious influence of the Spirit of God, for he has been aroused from his sleep of sin, and has begun to pray. It very commonly happens that, when persons are in this condition, they are seized with faintness. What is it that makes them feel faint?

Well, first, they may very well faint, for *they have made a most alarming discovery*. They were not aware of their true position, but they suddenly find themselves loss. Their own righteousness, which appeared to them to be like fair, white linen, has proved to be only filthy rags. Their own merits, which seemed to them to be a great heap of gold, are shown to be just so much dross. They fancied that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; but they find themselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. They see themselves condemned of God on account of sin, and they also see before them, with an awful astonishment, the burning lake of hell, and they cannot tell whether their next step will not plunge them into the dread abyss from which there will be no escape. Is it wonderful that, when a man first realizes all this, he is filled with terror, the cold sweat stands on his brow, and he is ready to faint? Indeed, if it were not for the goodness of God in only revealing the sinner's danger to him in a measure, I should not wonder if, when men saw themselves in their true state, they were to lose their reason. It has seemed to me at all marvelous that men have gone mad when they have suddenly found out where they were, and where they were likely to be in a very short time. I have had to bless God that so few cases of that kind have

occurred, and I have never wondered when I have seen the horror and distress of mind of persons who have discovered their loss condition. Some of you, who are now sitting very comfortably in your seats, if you only knew what it is to be condemned already, because you have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, if you could but catch the meaning of these words, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;” like a cloud charged with deadly electricity; if you discovered that this was no myth, or fiction, but an awful reality, you also would be ready to faint.

Sometimes, too, awakened sinners faint for another reason, namely, that *they have tried to escape from their dangerous position, that they have not succeeded*. What long and laborious attempts at self-salvation awakened souls will make! They will deny themselves many pleasures, they will subject themselves to a great deal of toil; they will resolve, and pray, and cry, and fret; yet it all ends in failure. A man trying to save himself is like a prisoner on the treadmill, perpetually stepping, but never mounting an inch higher. He is like a blind horse in a mill, he goes round, and round, and round, but makes no real advance. What can he do? He is trying to weave a substantial garment out of spiders’ webs. He is attempting, with worthless works, to make a perfect righteousness. It was no small blessing for Israel when it could be said of them, “He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.” The sooner an end comes to all self-righteous attempts to obtain salvation, the better. Then does the man’s soul faint within him; then is he like one who is at sea in a storm, who has tugged at the oar, or has tried to use the sail, but can make no headway, or escape the fury of the tempest. “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end.” Thus are they faint.

We have known some grow so faint, through a sense of sin, and dread of its punishment, and a consciousness of their own inability to save themselves, that *they have even wished to die*; yet, when they have looked at their condition aright, they have asked themselves what use death would be to them? It would be as when a man escaped from a lion, and a bear slew him; or as if a weary man leaned upon a wall, and a serpent, that was hidden in a cranny, bit his hand. For a man, loaded with sin, to die, is for him to be damned. Well might he choose to die if death meant annihilation; but there is that dread of something after death, that appearing before the

judgment seat of Christ, that terrible sentence from him that sitteth upon the throne, "Depart, ye cursed," this is what makes the man faint, and causes him to dread both to live and to die. Then does he say, with Job, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life;" yet he dare not actually choose it, for he dreads what would come after it. So he is faint, and well he may be.

Perhaps also, at such a time, *a sore trouble may happen to the man*; for, in the parable of the prodigal son, it appears that he was quite as much influenced by the peculiar circumstances without as by his sense of sin within. We have often known the soul, that has been under distress because of sin, also to fall into distress through temporal trouble. It has seemed as if the hand of God had gone out against him, and he cries out, in his agony, "Thou dost hunt me as with fierce dogs, that would fain tear me in pieces. Thou makest me the target of all thine arrows. Thou dost not give me space in which to swallow my spittle between one trial and another." Then the troubled soul faints beneath the hand of God, who seems to say to him, "Thou hast sinned against me; and if thou faintest now that I have begun to deal with thee, what wilt thou do by and by? If, in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, my hand is too heavy for thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If thou faintest when I do but come against thee with footmen, what wilt thou do when thou hast to contend with horses, - when I put forth my might to punish my rebellious creatures? "When this happens, the soul is utterly brought into the dust of death, ground down, faint, and ready to die."

Now I pass on to another character, namely, the child of God in his fainting fits, but fainting fits of a peculiar class, which are specially sinful, for there is a degree of sinfulness about some of these faintings which is not to be found in others. For instance, *sometimes, the children of God faint through want of faith*. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." So, the cure for fainting is faith, and the best way to prevent fainting, is to believe. He who believes shall not fall into this state of pain, prostration, inaction, and similitude of death. Child of God are you fainting because you do not believe your Father's promises? I must not begin to comfort you till, first of all, I have rebuked you. Why dost thou doubt thy God? On what ground dost thou distrust his faithfulness? Hast thou ever had cause to think that he will fail thee? Put thy finger on anything that he hath ever done to thee, that will give thee even a shadow of justification for mistrust of him. O man, if

unbelief be at the bottom of thy faintness, repent of it and pray to be forgiven! Surely the Lord deserves to be trusted by his own children, if not by anybody else. If anyone will persist in distrusting him, let it be the sinner; but as for you, the chosen people of his love, the favored ones of his heart, will you doubt him? A man might bear almost anybody's distrust sooner than that of his beloved wife or darling child; and shall the Lord have distrust from you whom he has so highly favored, By his own eternal love, pray him both to forgive and to banish your unbelief.

Again, some are brought into a state of faintness *through a selfish want of resignation*. A specimen of that kind of character was that queer-tempered old prophet Jonah. You remember that "the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered... And the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death." It was not alone the heat of the sun that caused him to faint; it was also the heat of his temper. Naughty tempers inside of us do more to cause us to faint than all the sultry weather outside of us. If we will not let God have his way with us, if we are like children in a pet, and begin quarrelling with our Father, or with one another; if we try to be masters in God's house, and lords over God's heritage, seeking to rule his household according to our own will and way; do you wonder that, when we get into the sulks, by-and-by we begin to faint? Some of those who have lost dear children seem as if they will not forgive God for taking them. They keep on fretting and pining for years after the bereavement; they go to the drawer, and take out the little socks, and the toys, and weep over them in a fashion which shows that they are not resigned to the will of God. It is not for us harshly to censure them, but I think it is for them to cease from such a rebellious course of action, and to ask God that they may not faint through a want of obedience and resignation to his will. There are children of God, also, who fall into faintness *through trusting in themselves*. In the chapter from which our text is taken, it is said, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." Why is that? It is because the youths felt themselves able to do anything. Up or down, mile after mile, they could leap, and run, and jump, for they were so strong; and then, at last, they

fainted, for they had nothing to sustain them but their own strength. And as for the young men, they said that the boys were always so impetuous, and spent their strength too soon, but they themselves had staying power, so they felt that they could keep up the pace. But the prophet says, they “shall utterly fall.” So will it be with any of us who begin to trust in our own strength. Before long, we shall come to the end of our force. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack sooner or later. The brightest thought of the most brilliant intellect will one day die out in darkness. Being made of clay, and being born of woman, we cannot expect that we should last for ever. The worst of it is, that this faintness will sometimes come to the strong just when they most need all their strength, when they feel, “If ever we wanted all our wits about us, and all the vigor of our physical frame, it is now.” It is just then that the collapse will probably come, for faintness is sure to follow if we once begin to trust in ourselves.

Then faintness may also arise from another cause which is sinful, namely, *neglect of prayer*. Did not our Savior say that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” and did he not imply, by that form of expression, that, if they did not pray, they would be sure to faint? We have a choice of these two courses, either to wait upon the Lord, and so to renew our strength, or else to be overpowered by faintness. Is the path to thy secret place of prayer overgrown? Dost thou seldom retire for private fellowship with thy God? Has thy heart forgotten thy privilege of momentary, continuous communion with the Most High? Dost thou live as though thou hadst quarrelled with God, and wouldst have no more dealings with him? If so, thou wilt surely faint before long; and it is a blessed thing for thee that it should be so, for it would be truly terrible for us even to appear to be strong without prayer. It is a sign of something radically rotten within when a man can be, apparently, just as holy, and just as earnest without prayer as ever he was with it. You surely cannot really know the power of the life of God if you are able to live without prayer; for, just as a man, who is unable to breathe, soon faints, so must a person spiritually faint if he does not pray.

Now I am going to mention some other reasons why children of God fall into faintness; and one is, *the length of the way*. Some pilgrims faint because the way is so very long. We can do a great deal at a spurt, but we are not able to keep it up. We have a great many people, who come amongst us, and who even enter the church, who are splendid fellows for a short time. If they could get to heaven in a one mile race, they would surely

win the prize; but they have no staying power in them. They are like those Galatians to whom the apostle Paul wrote, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? “What is needed is perseverance in well doing, perseverance under slights, and misrepresentations, and slanders, perseverance when it means tugging and toiling at the oars, perseverance when there is no smile of recognition, but when there is many a frown from those who misjudge your work; and it is under such difficulties that men are apt to faint. It is not even ten or twenty years of an unsullied profession that will suffice; our Lord said, “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” You would not care to live in your house if it were only half built; you must go on to the crowning of the edifice if it is to be fit for a habitation. Who that has realized how great are the difficulties of persevering in grace does not feel that, for this task, we must have divine power? Else, however far we may have gone, we shall tire, and faint, and walk the ways of God no more. I know of no doctrine that seems to me to show such a splendor of divine grace as the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints; for if the Lord does indeed keep his people faithful to the end, as he assuredly will, then is it a veritable marvel of grace; for, oftentimes, they themselves are ready to faint by the way.

Others are ready to faint *because of the heaviness of their burden*. We are not all burdened alike; but, I daresay, if we could form a right estimate, we should find that we are more equally weighted than we imagine. Sometimes, the poor judge that they have a monopoly of trouble; but if they could see how much unhappiness there is in the homes of some of those who are rich, or the want of health that is the lot of many who live in the midst of abundance, they might be more content to carry their own cross. Yet are there some to whom the burden is peculiarly heavy. Some of God’s children seem pressed down under double loads, and they are often ready to faint. The remedy for their condition is, to get double grace and double strength from the Lord their God; but, until they do so, their soul will feel faint and weary.

Another frequent cause of your faintness is *a sense of your own weakness*. It is not that your burden is really heavier than it was, but you do not feel as if you could carry it any longer. The flesh is weak, and the spirit sympathizes with the flesh, and grows weak, too. You cannot now do what you did when you were younger; the difficulties which you smiled at once really oppress you now. By reason of the length of your years, the grasshopper has become a burden. Well, then, you must look to the Strong

for strength, and then no faintness will overpower you; but if you do not, your weakness will soon bring you into a sad state.

Yet another frequent cause of faintness is *the spirit itself sinking*. There is a certain condition, in which the heart seems to go down, down, down, down, down; I know now how to describe it, but everybody who has ever had that painful experience knows what it is. You can hardly tell why you are so depressed; if you could give a reason for your despondency, you might more easily get over it; but, like David, you cry to your own heart, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" You try to argue with yourself to find out the reason why you are so despondent, and why you look at the black side of everything, and imagine that things will go amiss which will turn out right after all. Your friends tell you that you are nervous, and there is no doubt that you are, but that does not alter the case. I will not blame you; I will, however, say to myself, and urge you to say to yourself, "Hope thou in God: for thou shalt yet praise him, who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God." Better still, I pray our sympathizing Savior to say to you, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and on his loving bosom leave all your sorrows and your cares.

There are some children of God who get faint *through lack of spiritual food*. There are some Christians, who are so situated that they cannot get proper nourishment for their souls. It is not in every country village or town that Jesus Christ is so preached that the souls of God's people are fed; and among all the troubles a godly man can have, a dreary Sabbath is about the worst, when the sheep look up, but they are not fed; when it is not the gospel that is preached, but another gospel, which is no gospel at all; when there are fine words, and grand elocution, but nothing for the heart to stay itself upon. In such circumstances, it is small wonder if the best of God's children begin to faint. Be thankful, brethren and sisters, if you are privileged to enjoy a soul-feeding ministry; and if you are not so favored, try to make up for it by being doubly diligent in searching the Scriptures, and feeding upon the Word in private. Still, at the same time, it is a great deprivation to a child of God if he is not supplied with spiritual food. I thought it was a good prayer of the deacon who thanked God that the minister had put the food down in a low rack where the sheep could get at it. There are some who put the provender in such a high rack that it could only be reached by giraffes God's children need to have the bread of life broken up small for them, and to have the truth made very simple and

plain so that they can understand it. May all of us, who teach or preach, always try to do that; and remembering the folly of others, let us avoid it ourselves.

Sometimes, God's children also faint *when they are in adversity*. Solomon said, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." That is true, and our strength is often thus proved to be small. Many a man, who thinks that he is rejoicing in the Lord, is really rejoicing in his prosperity; but adversity tries him, it is to him what the fining pot is to silver. Under adversity, we begin to faint; and especially if, coupled with that adversity, there is the rebuke of God. Oh, how we faint when we are rebuked of him! I know of nothing that more readily makes a man faint than that God should look at him with angry eyes. He has trouble in the home, and no consolation; loss of property, but, above all, loss of fellowship with his God. The promises are no longer sweet unto him, prayer is like a dead letter, waiting upon God seems to be in vain. The Lord says to those who are in this condition, "I have withdrawn myself from you. As ye have walked contrary to me, I also will walk contrary to you." Under such a dispensation, it is needful for the child of God to ask for more grace and strength, that he may wrestle and pray until he gets a blessing; but the tendency of the poor deserted spirit is to begin to faint because the Lord seems to be favorable no more.

There are some who become faint *through increasing infirmity*, which unfits them for such service as they formerly rendered. When David, in his later years, went out to battle against the Philistines, we are told that he waxed faint, and would have been slain by a giant if Abishai had not succored him. Yet, in former days, he had killed a lion and a bear, and the great Goliath of Gath. It was a dreadful thing for David to wax faint at such a time as that, just in the middle of the fray; but a like experience has happened to many of the Lord's champions, in order to teach his people that the best of men are but men at the best, and that the strongest of them are only strong in God's strength, and that they will be as weak as water if the Lord should leave them to themselves.

II. Now I want to show you how the Lord deals with his fainting people: "He giveth power to the faint. I must just briefly mention many points, that you may meditate upon at your leisure.

See how tenderly the Lord deals with his fainting people. He does not desert them when they are faint, saying, "They are no longer any use to me,

they can do nothing for me, I will leave them where they are.” No; but “he giveth power to the faint, “Observe that he does not merely comfort the faint; or rebuke or reprove them. That would not help them much when they were fainting; but he does what we cannot do for fainting people he gives them power. That is the best way to deliver them from their faintness. Even if no cheering word is whispered in your ear, if power is given to you, if your pulse is quickened, and your spirit is filled with new energy, your faintness will soon be over. This is what the Lord does for you when “he giveth power to the faint.

What sort of power does he give to the faint? Well, you may be sure that *he does not give them any of their own*. That has all gone from them. The very image of death is stamped upon them. See how pale they look; note how the blood seems to have fled from their faces; their own power has all gone from them. So, my brothers and sisters, when the Lord gives power to the faint, it is his own power that he gives to them. What a blessing it is to feel that it is his power that is working in you! To attain such an end as that, a man may well be content to have all his own power bled out of him. There! let it run out at every vein till the last drop of it is gone, that I may then be filled with the power of God. He gives his power to the faint, because, in their faintness, there is room for the display of his power. Their power has all departed, so now his power comes in.

When God gives power to the faint, you may rest assured that *it will be sufficient for the emergency*, for he has all-sufficient power, and he never gives to his people merely half the power or a tenth of the power that they need, but he gives them all the power that they require. His promise is, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

The mercy is, that the power that God gives is a *power that the devil can neither defeat nor take away*. If he has given you that power, it shall be yours as long as you need it. That power neither man nor devil can take away from you; but, through it, you shall be enabled to tread down all your adversaries, and conquer all your difficulties. There is a wondrous power in the weakness which leads us to faint away on the bosom of God, and so to be made strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, just to swoon into unconsciousness, and then to find our all-sufficiency in our God, to get out of life of a carnal kind by swooning into the image of death, and then being raised into newness of life by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the kind of power which God giveth to the faint.

Why is it that he gives this power to the faint, Well, I think it is because, in his great goodness, *he looks out for those who need it most*. As we, if we are wise, give our alms to the most destitute, God gives his power to those who require it most, those who are fainting for lack of it.

Then, next, he gives it to them because *they will praise him most for it*. When the fainting ones receive the power that God gives to them, they will say that it is of the Lord and not of themselves.

They will be the people to receive this power because *they will be sure to use it*. I think that, when a person, who has been faint, receives power from God, he will be likely to be sympathetic, tender, and gentle towards others; at least, that is how he should be. If a man is always strong, how can he sympathize with God's weak and afflicted people? I have known a dear brother, who has never had an hour's illness in his life, seek to sympathize with me when I have been in great pain; but it was like an elephant trying to pick up a pin; he cannot do it, it is not in his line. But he who has been faint, and then has received power from God, is the man who knows what faintness means, and so is gentle towards other fainting ones as a nurse is with the little child committed to her charge. Hence, the Lord entrusts power to his fainting children because he knows that they will be sympathetic, and use it wisely and well.

What, beloved friends, is the conclusion that we may draw from our text? Is it not this? If God gives power to the faint, let us be thankful if we have fainted, and have been revived by him. I do not refer to any sinful kind of fainting when I speak thus, but I mean what the apostle Paul means when he says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." But let us have done with fainting for the future; because, if God giveth power to the faint, if he has given us his power, we ought to have no more fainting now that we have received God's power, so let us henceforth seek to live, in the energy of that divine might, above the faintness to which the flesh is prone.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ISAIAH 40.

Verse 1. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

“They need it, and they shall have it. Mind, O my servants, that you give it to them: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

The first meaning of these words was that, as Jerusalem had passed through a time of great tribulation, she should have a season of rest, but the grand gospel meaning to you and to me is, that our Lord Jesus has fought our battle, and won the victory for us, that he has paid our debt and given to divine justice the double for all our sins, and therefore, our iniquity is pardoned. This is enough to make anyone happy, one would think. It is the best thing that even Isaiah could say, or that God himself could say by the mouth of Isaiah, when his object was to comfort the Lord's tried people.

3, 4. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

When God means to come to men, nothing can stop him or block up his road. He will level mountains, and fill up valleys, but he will come to his people, somehow or other. And when he comes to them, if he finds many crooked things about them, he will make the crooked straight, and the rough places he will make plain.

5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

And, since he has spoken it, it must come to pass. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? “With him, to say anything is to will its accomplishment.

6-8. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Yes, the dearest ones that we have are but flesh, so they wither, and pass away like the green herb. Have you been bereaved, my believing friend? Well, you may still say to your Lord, in the words of our hymn,

“How can I bereaved be, Since I cannot part from thee?”

The mower with the sharp scythe cuts down the grass, but he cannot touch the secret source of our hope, and joy, and confidence in God, and, above all, he cannot touch the God in whom we confide.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

If the chief, the best, the holiest city has found her God, if Jerusalem has been thus favored, let her sing the gladsome tidings, over the hilltops, to the most distant cities of the land, and say to them, “Behold your God “If you have seen your Lord, beloved, proclaim the good news to those who have well nigh forgotten that there is a God, say to them, “Behold your God. He is still to be seen, by the eye of faith, working graciously in the midst of the earth.”

10-11. Behold, the lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

He knows their weakness, their weariness, their pain, and how incapable they are of speedy and long travelling; he is very tender and pitiful, and he will gently lead them.

12-14. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

And yet, beloved, we sometimes act as if we were God’s teachers, as if we had to instruct him what he should do, and because we cannot see our way,

we almost dream that he cannot, and because we are puzzled, we conceive that infinite wisdom must be at a nonplus; but it is not so. He was full of wisdom when there was no one with whom he could take counsel, and he is still wise in the highest degree.

15. *Behold, the nations are so a drop of a bucket,* Not a bucketful, but just a drop that remains in the bucket after you thought it had been completely emptied.

15. *And are counted as the small dust of the balance:*

Remember that this is said of “the nations.” China, India, Europe, Africa, with all their teeming multitudes, are only like the small dust of the balance that is blown away by the slightest puff of wind.

15,16. *Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon*

With all its forests of cedar: “Lebanon” —

16. *Is not sufficient to burn,*

Think of all the cedars of Lebanon as being on a blaze, like some great forest fire, yet not being sufficient to supply the wood for God’s altars.

16. *Nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.*

Whether it be the wild or the tame beasts that are on that mountain range, they are not sufficient for a burnt offering unto the Most High.

17. *All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

As if they were the mere shadow of something, and had no more influence over him than as if they did not exist.

18. *To whom then will ye liken God?*

This is a strong argument against idolatry, against the worship of God under any visible form whatsoever: “To whom then will ye liken God?”

18. *Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?* The heathen did make these supposed likenesses of God. Here is a description of the process by which they manufactured their idol gods.

19. *The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold,*

The rough metal is cast in a certain fashion, and then the goldsmith puts on it his thin plates of gold,

19. *And casteth silver chains.*

To adorn it.

20. *He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation —*

The poor man, who cannot manage to make a god of gold,

20. *Chooseth a tree that will not rot;*

A good piece of heart of oak or enduring elm.

20. *He seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.*

Fix it firmly, drive the post down far into the earth, so that it may be an immovable god.

21-26. *Have ye not known? Have ye not heard a hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations or the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princess to nothing, he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted, yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high,*

Suppose it to be night time: “Lift up your eyes on high,” —

26. *And behold who hath created these things,*

These wondrous worlds, these stars that bespangle the firmament.

26. *That bringeth out their host by number:*

For God knows the number of them all, and the name of every separate world that moves in the vast expanse of space.

26. *He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his mighty for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

They are not propped up with pillars, nor hung upon some mighty ropes, yet they continue to occupy the spheres appointed to them by God. He hangeth the world upon nothing, and keeps it in its place by the perpetual out-going of his power.

27. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

What! when he has not forgotten one of all those mighty hosts of stars, and when not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice, how can you dream that he has forgotten you, or that your way is hidden from him?

28-31. *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*