

THE NAIL IN A SURE PLACE.

NO. 3402

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will fasten him as, a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it.” — Isaiah 22:23-25.

WE have read, in your hearing, the occasion of these words. Shebna the scribe, having become proud and vainglorious, was to be put away, and his place to be occupied by a better man on whom God promised to establish his favor. When Shebna the scribe was put away, it was like the drawing out of a nail which, apparently, had been well fastened, and all that had been hanging upon it came down with its fall; thus did Shebna’s family suffer for his sin. It is just so in the world at this day. It were well if some men who have gone into evil ways had considered this. It is not they alone who suffer. Such is the order and constitution of the commonwealth of manhood that, when the husband sins, the house hold must feel much of the smart. Oftentimes, for wife and children, there has been wrung out a cup of bitterness, of which they have been made to drink, not through their own fault, but through the fault of the head of the family. Should there be any man here have strayed into this house to-night who contemplates putting forth his hand to that which is not good, though he might dare to risk the consequences for his own sake, yet, for the sake of the children of his loins and the wife of his bosom, let him pause, lest, peradventure, he fill

their lives with bitterness, or send them to their graves prematurely in poverty and shame.

That is not, however the subject upon which I shall talk at this time. When Shebna was removed, there was room for Eliakim. Let this furnish the key to a spiritual lesson. It has been generally propounded and admitted by commentators and expositors that Eliakim is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. While this passage literally refers to Eliakim himself, it may, with very great instructiveness, be used as applicable to the Lord Jesus, and so I use it. The first point will be this: —

I. IN ORDER TO MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS CHRIST, THERE MUST BE AN OVERTHROW OF SOMEBODY ELSE, just as in order to make room for Eliakim Shebna, who seemed to be like a nail fastened in a sure place, must be pulled out, and there must be a downfall of his glory.

Beloved, whenever Jesus Christ comes into the heart, before he rides in state into the Castle of Mansoul, there is a battle, a strife, a struggle, a down-casting of the image of sin, and then a setting up of the cross in its place. All men, by nature, have some kind of righteousness. There is no man so vile but he still wraps himself up in his rags and cajoles himself into the belief that he has some degree of excellence, spiritual or moral. Before Christ can come into the heart, all this *natural excellence must be torn to shreds*; Every single stone of the wall upon which we have builded aforetime must come down, and the foundations must be utterly destroyed before we shall ever build aright and surely for eternity upon the cornerstone of Christ Jesus. All our conceit about our past righteousnesses must be completely overthrown. Perhaps we flatter ourselves that all is well, because we have been baptized or have come to the Communion, like one who was visited, a few days ago, by an elder. Seeing that she was sick, and near to die, he asked her, "Have you a good hope?" "Oh! sir, yes; a good and blessed hope." "And pray," said he, "what is it?" "Well," she said, "I have taken the Sacrament regular for fifty years." What think ye of that in a Christian country, from the lips of one who had attended a gospel ministry? Her confidence was built upon the mere fact of her having attended to an outward ceremony to which, probably, she had no right whatever! There are hundreds and thousands who are thus resting upon mere ceremonies. They have been church-goers or chapel-goers from their youth up. They have never been absent, except under sickness, from their regular place of worship. Good easy souls! are these the bladders upon which they hope to

swim in eternity, they will surely burst, to their everlasting destruction. Some base their confidence on the fact that they have never indulged in the grosser vices; others that they have been scrupulously honest in their commercial transactions. Some that they have been good husbands; others that they have been charitable neighbors. I know not of what poor flimsy tissue men will not make a covering to hide their natural nakedness. But all this must be unravelled — every stitch of it.

No man can put on the robes of Christ's righteousness till he has taken off his own. Christ will never go shares in our salvation. God will not have it said that he partly made the heavens, but that some other spirit came in to conclude the gigantic work of creation, much less will he divide the work of our salvation with any other. He must be the alone Savior as he was the alone Creator. In the wine-press of his sufferings Jesus stood alone; of the people none were with him: no angel could assist him in the mighty work; in the fight he stood alone the solitary Champion, the sole Victor. So too thou must be saved by him alone, resting on him entirely, and counting thine own righteousness to be dross and dung, or else thou canst never be saved at all. It must be down with Shebna, or else it cannot be up with Eliakim. It must be down with self, or it can never be up with Christ. Self-righteousness must be set aside to make room for the righteousness of Jesus; otherwise, it can never be ours.

We must, with equal thoroughness, be ready to give up *all confidence in our own resolutions, or vows, or endeavors*, for the future, and come to rest the future where we rest the past, on Christ, and Christ alone. I know it is the idea of many that albeit that they have slipped and fallen in the past, yet they shall be able to stand upright in the future. Have they not resolved it? Can they not do it? Are they not able to do as they will? As they have had much ability for evil, have they not an equal ability for good? So self-sufficiency talks. But when a man comes to know himself, and to know Christ he sings another note. "Ah!" said an aged saint, as he heard of men that were taken to the police station, and of some that were condemned to die, and others that were transported; "Ah!" said he, "he to-day; I to-morrow, if the grace of God did not prevent." So every truly humbled man will say, when he hears of the great offenses of others, "They to-day, and I to-morrow, unless grace shall intervene to keep me from following their ill-example." Brethren, our only hope for the future lies in this, that those who trust Jesus are in Jesus Christ's hand, and that he is able to keep that which they commit to him. Those who trust in Jesus have

this promise that the Holy Spirit shall dwell in them, and walk in them, writing a law upon their hearts making their hearts new: moulding their natures into the nature of Christ, causing them to hate evil, and to choose that which is good. You will never kill a single evil passion through your own strivings apart from the precious blood of Christ. Those vipers within our bosom will never die till they are sprinkled with the blood of the Great Sacrifice, and then they all depart. Jesus comes and fills the heart, and then evil is crushed beneath his foot, and is slain utterly, so that Christ becomes fully formed in us the hope of glory.

Now, it is hard for a man to give up these two things — all glorying in the past, and all hope for the future, in himself. It is hard to be a pauper, and to knock at Mercy's door and ask an alms, and yet only as paupers can we come. I do not allude exclusively to you that have been great sinners outwardly only, but I mean you moral men and women, you that are good and excellent in a thousand ways. You must still come, just as the poor publican came, with "God be merciful to me a sinner." These are God's terms, and he will accept you on no other. Oh! be not proud enough to kick at them, but submit yourself to the dictates of eternal love, and let your vanity and self-opinion be abased that Jesus Christ be all in all to you.

Before I leave this point, let me remark that, as this is to be done before we come to Christ, so all our life long it is one of the things about which we must always be vigilant, for the tendency of human nature, as long as we are in this world, is to get something to rest upon in ourselves. We can hardly be indulged with the light of Jehovah's countenance before we begin to make a confidence of it; and if our graces for a little while bud and bloom like seeming flowers, we very soon begin to compliment ourselves upon our imaginary goodness. Borrowed though every excellence be, we begin to be proud of it, and to forget too much that in him is all our salvation, and all confidence. This knocking down has to be persevered in, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and yet as fast as we can, in our pride build up anything in which we can glory, the Lord sends a terrible blast of some kind or other against the wall, and sweeps it all down, that Jesus Christ may alone be exalted in our experience.

Thus much upon the first point. There must be a down-throwing, a pulling out of one nail before there can be another for us to hang upon. Now, let us turn to a second thought, which is this: —

II. THE NATURE OF OUR TRUE DEPENDENCE, as set forth in the words of the 23rd and 24th verses.

The reliance of a really saved soul is upon the person, the work, and righteousness of Jesus Christ only. This dependence is warranted by *God's appointment*. Turn to the 23rd verse: "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place." That other nail, in the 25th verse, God never fastened, but this is one that God fastens; and what God does lasts for ever. Dost thou, dear hearer, rest thy soul's salvation alone upon Jesus? Then, mark thee, he can never fail thee, for if he do, then would it be true that God had been mistaken. 'Twere blasphemy to think it. If the Lord appoints Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and yet he doth not make that propitiation, then there is a mistake somewhere. If God bids me lean my whole weight upon his Son, and I do so lean, and yet am not sustained, then is there a great mistake, not on my part only, but on the part of Infinite Wisdom. But we cannot suppose that. The Lord knew what he was doing when he appointed the Only Begotten to be the sinner's pillar of strength, upon which he might lean. He knew that Jesus could not fail; that as God he was all-sufficient; that as perfect man he would not turn aside; that as a bleeding surety, having paid all the debt of our sin upon Calvary, he was able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. I come into this pulpit so continually that it is a place to which I am more accustomed than any other in the world, and this is the one cry I am always uttering in various shapes and ways; it is this one truth I present with unwearying interest. Jesus Christ the Son of God, died on the cross of Calvary, bearing upon himself the sin of all that trust him, and for all that trust him he has made a full atonement, so that their sins are forgiven; Christ has paid their debts, they are free; he was punished for them; they cannot be punished. God cannot punish the same sin twice; if he punishes Christ, he will not punish any for whom Christ died. Now, if this statement were my own invention, did I promulgate it as coming out of my own thoughts, it were worthy of no acceptance, but inasmuch as God reveals it in his Word, oh! this is the soul and marrow of the Christian religion. Rest on it, and if you be deceived, were suck a thing possible what a consolation would you have in appealing to the proclamation of divine mercy as an answer to all the terrors that menaced you. But that can never be. Impossible! It is the truth O sinner. However guilty thou mayest be, believe this truth, that Christ is able to save thee, and go and cast thyself on him. Rest on his finished work, and as God is true, he will not, he cannot, turn

aside from his solemn oath and promise: “He that believeth in Christ is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” The Christian’s dependence, then, is of divine appointing.

Moreover, the believer’s dependence *is of God’s sustaining*, for note, “I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” God ensures the future — that Christ shall always be to his people their glory and their defense. You know, we like good names to be attached to great compacts. In all commercial dealing, especially in large transactions, we like good and safe men to trust in, though, indeed, where are they to be found now-a-day — since the best of them are sharper than a thorn-edge. Oh! honesty, thou art fled, perished, buried years ago, and the very rags thou once didst wear are rotten now. But here, if nowhere else, here in the gospel we have a name in which we may trust, the name of the thrice-holy God that cannot lie, and he declares that he will sustain his Son as the Savior of his people. Need I urge any rational spirit to depend where God pledges his word? “Let God be true, and every man a liar,” and if have God’s word for it, cast yourselves unreservedly upon his Word. You shall not find him fail you; you shall rejoice as in heaven you sing of the faithfulness of the God that spake, and the everlasting righteousness with which he fulfils every word he has spoken.

Further still; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the believer’s great foundation and confidence, is also *the Christian’s fountain of glory*. “He shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” All his father’s house was to be ennobled through the ennobling of Eliakim and so is the Christian ennobled through the ennobling of the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature what are we but despicable? If we consider the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, we are so minute as not to, be worthy to be called specks in creation. If we look at our sinfulness, we are reduced still lower in the scale; and if we see our continued tendency to fresh sin, we are obliged to say, “Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him at all?” But yet man is an honorable creature when he lays hold on Christ then he is lifted up, and made to have dominion over all the works of God’s hands. All things are put under his feet in the person of Christ Jesus. There is no honor in the whole universe — nay, not the honor of the angels themselves — that can exceed the honor that is put upon the man who believes in Jesus Christ. I wish we always thought so, for, indeed it is so. In the olden times, when one was brought before the magistrate to be accused and adjudged to death for his

Christianity, he blushed not to avow his soul's attachment to his Savior with open face. When they asked him what he was, he said, "A Christian." "And what is your name?" He said, "My name is Christian." "And what is your occupation?" "My occupation is a Christian." "And what is your wealth, what are your degree and rank?" He said, "I am a Christian." And to every question they put, he gave but this one answer, "I am a Christian; I am a Christian." All the wealth and all the glory of this world are nothing compared with the glory that comes to the very meanest man who is really allied to Christ, and can truly be called a Christian. Lift up your heads, ye poor and needy: rejoice, ye downtrodden and oppressed, ye toiling workers, ye forgotten ones among the sons of men, for if your destiny be linked with the person of the once crucified, but now exalted, Savior, you shall partake of his glory in the day of his appearing, and be for ever sharers of the splendor which eternally shall surround your Lord.

Here, then, is much to comfort us; he upon whom we depend is divinely appointed, divinely sustained, and all his glory he sheds on us. But now pass on and note that: —

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S WHOLE DEPENDENCE IS PLACED UPON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, as declared in the 24th verse. The metaphor is this: There is a pin in a palace, and upon this there may be hung up suits of armor, or whatever else the owner of the palace chooses to put there; but instead of that, there are hung golden wine-cups and goblets. Some of them are small vessels of not much capacity; others of them are great flagons adapted to hold large quantities, but they are all hanging upon this bracket, all suspended there as trophies. If the nail be taken out, the smaller vessels fall, and so do the larger ones, too, for they all equally and alike hang on that nail. Their only support from falling, and being bruised upon the floor, is that one pin which holds them all. Such is Christ to all his people. All Christians are not alike capacious vessels of grace. Some can receive much; they are full of knowledge, zeal, hope, joy, faith. Others will never be anything but little vessels. They have believed, but their faith is mixed with unbelief. They "can do but little, they have but few talents, their knowledge is obscured; their progress in the divine life is but small. Still, for all that, they rest on nothing less than Christ. They need not rest on anything more, and the great ones depend on nothing less than Christ, nor can they rest on anything more. The little cup is quite as safe, for it hangs on the nail, as the flagon does. Truly, one might be ambitious to be a flagon, to hold a deeper draught for its Lord's pleasure, but the littleness of the tiniest vessel does

not affect its safety. The safety of all that hang there lies in the fastness of the pin, the strength and security of the nail. Not in the littleness of the one, nor the greatness of the other, is there either safety or danger, but all rests on that pin. So is it with the whole Church of God. We are all hanging upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. If we have served him well, and served him long, yet we have nothing whereof to glory, but we cast all aside, and rest, as helpless sinners upon the blessed Savior. If we have but just begun to serve him, and so are babes in grace, we rest entirely upon him. If we have fallen into sin, and have been backsliders, yet still we come again and look to his merits that we may be restored; or if we have lived a blameless life, through his abundant grace, yet still for all that, we have no other dependence than the rest of the saints, but entirely, solely, only rest in Jesus. This is very simple doctrine, expressed in very simple talk, but I do wish that somebody had told me this years before I heard it, for I always had the notion that I was to be saved by something I did, and something I felt. I supposed it was a great mystery, a matter that took months and years to solve, and that, even then, it was attended with imminent risk, and that the dreary search for this inestimable prize might end in disappointment. Oh! I wish I had been told earlier that there was nothing whatever for me to do of myself, but simply to come, just as I was, and cast myself upon what Christ had done for me, and for sinners like me, and that, if I rested wholly upon him, I should be saved from my sins, and from the tendency to sin, and be made holy in Christ Jesus. Now, I feel inclined to put this whenever I am talking of it, into the simplest language and the shortest sentences, in order that if there should be a lad here, a child here, that is seeking salvation, he may not be kept in darkness, as I was, month after month, and year after year, trying to know what to do to be saved. Man, woman whoever you may be, what is to save you is done; Christ has done it all. The robe you have got to wear in heaven is spun already; you have not got to sit at the loom, working away and making a garment with which to cover your sins. The fountain in which you have to be washed you have not got to fill, nor even to drop a tear into it to make it perfect. There it is, filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and all you have to do is but to step into it by simply trusting it. Trust Christ; rely on Christ; depend on Christ, and it is done, and you are saved. The flagons and the cups put on the nail are safe there. You that put on Jesus Christ now are safe now, safe-to-night, safe all your life, and safe in glory everlasting.

Now, I should like to ask a question of two or three classes, and then send you home. There are a great many of us here to-night who are teachers of others. Some of you are deacons, elders, Sunday School teachers, street preachers. I thank God that you are a busy people, and you are doing much for Christ. There is a question I want to ask of you, and of myself: Are we who teach others sure that we have believed in Christ ourselves? Are we quite quite, quite sure that we are saved? It is well to ask that question, it is a very dangerous thing, indeed, for an unsaved man to begin to work for Christ, for the probabilities are that he will take for granted what he ought diligently to have proved. In many cases he never will seek to be saved; but go on, on, on, never pausing to examine, himself, and so, while professing to work for God, he may be a stranger to the work of God on himself.

There is an old story I recollect reading somewhere of a lunatic in an asylum, who one day saw a very lean cook. Accosting him he said, "Cook do you make good food?" "Yes," said the cook. "Are you sure?" "Yes." "And does anybody get fat on it?"; "Yes," again was the reply. "Then," said the man, "you had better mind what you are after, or else, when the governor comes round, he will put you in along with me" for if you make good food, and yet are so thin yourself, you must be mad for you do not eat it, or else you would get fat, too!" There is some sense in that. You teach others, you say; you give them spiritual food; but why not feed on it yourselves? Master, what right hast thou to teach if thou wilt not first learn? Physician, physician, heal thyself! Brother, it will go hard with you and with me, if we are lost. What will become of us teachers of others, if, after having led others to the river, we never drink, after bringing others the heavenly food, we perish of spiritual famine ourselves? I cannot go round to all the members of this church, and all the workers, and take them by the hand and say, "My dear brother or sister, be not deceived and do not go on deceiving us"; but I sometimes wish I could do that, and I wish you would take it as done to-night, for there are some awful hypocrites among us. There are some who come in and behave right well apparently, who are nothing better than abominable hypocrites, rotten through and through; and yet in our charity we never suspect them, and if we occasionally discover one we stand amazed and say "Lord, shall I be the next thus to be a Judas and betray my Master?" There never was a church in which such hypocrites have not at all times been exposed to view, unless they were all in the gall of bitterness together, dead in an empty profession. and then it is no marvel that there should be little inclination to exercise discipline. Christ's twelve had a Judas, and all churches must expect to find the chaff

that must be driven away into the fire when the wheat is purged by the great Master's fan. I do beseech you, my dear brethren and sisters, let not membership with this church, or any other church, assist you in self-delusion, but do — oh! how shall I put it, how shall I put it? — do, before you think about the conversion of other people see to it that your own conversion is accomplished. Count yourself no way safe till you hang on that nail. You need not talk to others about trusting in Christ till you have first trusted yourselves.

Out of the many hearers who have listened to me so long, may there not be a great number who though taught in the doctrine of the Word have never yet been obedient to it? For a man to perish before knowing the gospel will be a dreary thing; but for him to die, when he knows the gospel, is something horrible — to be drowned with the life-belt within reach, to perish in the dark, when the light is to be had; to die of famine, like Tantalus, with the golden apples close to one's lips; to perish of thirst with the water gurgling at one's throat! Oh! it will be a sound of horror for ever in the lost ones' ears when they shall hear the echo of the Sabbath bells — if such sounds can penetrate the murky regions where lost spirits dwell — the sound, I say, of the Sabbath bells, reminding them of Lord's days wasted and neglected; the sound familiar to them when on earth of the preacher's voice as he pleaded, entreated, thundered, threatened, wept, begged men to be saved. If there could be silence there, and all could be forgotten, there might be, a lull in the fierce hail-storm of Almighty wrath. But they can never forget, for it is said, "Son, remember; son, remember"; and they shall remember that they were called, but would not come; that they were invited, but declined the feast; that they were instructed, but shut their eyes; that they were wooed, but they hardened their necks and chose their own delusions. Oh! by the mercy of the blessed God, write not your names, my hearers, amongst the guilty and terrible multitude.

And may there not be some who come merely as casual hearers now and then, who instead of gleaning anything that is good out of what we, have tried to say, only recollect our mistakes, our mannerisms, our faults of gesture or of style? It may be sport to some of you to sit and hear, but it is awful as death for us to stand and preach. I mean, it is no child's play for a man to feel "I stand in God's place to that people this night, and as though God did beseech them by me, I am to pray them, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." He that can toy with his ministry, and count it to be like a trade; or like any other profession, was never called of God. But he

that hath a charge pressing on his heart, and a woe ringing in his ears, and preaches as though he heard the cries of hell behind him, and saw his God looking down upon him — oh! how that man entreats the Lord that his hearers may not hear in vain. Yet? alas! alas! by how many who come to hear, all that is good is forgotten, and only some worthless thing is treasured up. As among those who go to the goldsmith's shop, while one is looking at a pearl, and another admires a ruby, and another would fain purchase a diamond, there may be an idiot who picks up a coal from the floor, and thinks that shall be his, takes it home with him, and blackens his fingers with it, and then goes his way and finds fault with the jeweller who dropped it; so are ye foolish people and unwise who are attracted by nothing that is precious in the gospel, but are diligent to collect any refuse that drops in the pulpit. Oh! sirs, if you must find fault with us, do so, and welcome, as much as ever you will, but do not forget that there is truth in the sentence that if you are to be saved, you must rest alone upon the work of Jesus. You want saving; you want it to-night. There may never be another occasion on which you may have an opportunity of finding salvation. The opportunity is given to you now. May the Holy Spirit give you the will as well as the occasion, and may you now say: —

*“I'll go to Jesus though my sins
Have like a mountain rose;
I know his courts, I'll enter in
Whatever may oppose.
“Prostrate I'll lie before his throne,
And there my sins confess;
I'll tell him I'm a wretch undone
without his sovereign grace.”
God bless these words for Jesus' sake.*

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ISAIAH 41:1-18.

God enters into a controversy with those who had fallen into the worship of idols.

Verse 1. *Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*

He challenges them to a debate. He gives them breathing time — bids them prepare themselves, and come with the best arguments that their minds could find.

2, 3. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

Who was it that raised up Cyrus, and who made him strong to defeat the foe? Did the false gods do it? Could they claim any share therein? He puts it to them.

4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Long before Cyrus was born, God thus spoke of him. It is declared what work he should do. What better proof could there be that God is God?

Do the false gods foretell the future? Are their oracles to be depended upon? Yet the Lord's word is true and standeth fast for ever. "I Jehovah, first, and with the last, I am he."

5, 6. The isles saw it, and feared: the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came. They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.

When men fight against God, they get united. What a very sad thing it is that God's children should ever fall out. There is one sin that I never heard charged upon the devils namely, the sin of disunity. Of all the evil things we have heard, I have never heard that among the principalities of the pit there has ever been any division into sects and parties. Oh! sad that in this respect we should fall short of them. The enemies of God helped everyone, his neighbor, "and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage."

7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

What a sarcastic description of god-making this is! There is the carpenter, and then the goldsmith to spread the plates of gold over the wood, and then it is soldered, and it has to be fastened with nails. The simple facts

about the making of gods are sufficient to pour ridicule upon idolatry. God deliver us from idolatry of any form or shape, whether it comes from Rome or Canterbury. May we have no symbol — no visible object of worship whatever, but get rid of all that, and before the great invisible Spirit let us bow, worshipping him in spirit and in truth. For the least touch of the symbolical soon leadeth on to the idolatrous, and what at the first seemed harmless soon cometh to be harmful so that well doth the law say, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.” Oh! to keep clear of this great and heinous sin!

8, 9. *But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant: I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

The people of Israel were reserved by God that they might worship him. While other nations went to their idols, the Israelites were to be his servants, chaste in heart towards himself. It is so with the Lord’s believing people. Ye are elected and selected, chosen and ordained, and set apart. You may fear the Lord, and not give your hearts to any other. May God grant that we may be true to this our sacred trust. Notice how very sweetly in this text the Lord alludes to his friendship to Abraham, “The seed of Abraham, *my friend*.” When the Lord makes a friend of a man, he means it, and he keeps up that friendship to his children and his children’s children. Happy are they who have a father who is a friend of God. Just as David did good to Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan, so, doubtless, many blessings come to the children for the sake of their parents. The Lord keepeth mercy to the third and fourth generation, yea, and throughout all generations to them that keep his covenant.

10. *Fear thou not: for I am with thee:*

What cause for fear now? If I am with thee, thou needest not fear all the men on earth, nor all the demons of the pit. Fear thou not, for I am with thee.”

10. *Be not dismayed: for I am thy God:*

“Thy God.” Lay the stress there if you will, or “thy *God*, therefore thine all-sufficient helper — thine immutable, faithful, everlasting friend.”

10-12. *I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.*

Go on, then, child of God. All thy foes that resist thy salvation shall disappear before thy onward march. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Advance to meet thy cares, and God shall take thy cares away. Only be thou strong and of a good courage, and rest in the everlasting arm, and thou shalt be more than a conqueror.

13, 14. *For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob.*

Poor worm! How can it take care of itself? Even a bird can destroy it. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.” You know what a worm does for its defense. It is all that it can do: it hides itself in the earth. Hide thyself in thy God. Get thee into the rock, and there be hidden till the danger be overpast. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

14. *And ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

How many times the Lord puts it, “I will help thee”! How again and again, he saith, “Fear not”! For despondency is deeply graven in some spirits. There are some minds that seem to gravitate that way again and again, and again; and even the divine assurances have to be given repeatedly before they feel comfort. have any of you been troubled because your children do not learn the first time you teach them? See how you are towards your heavenly Father! how many times he has to teach you, line upon line, precept upon precept — here a little, and there a little; and if he hath patience with our infirmities, we may very readily have patience with the infirmities of our little ones.

15. *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth.*

He will make poor feeble worms to be like that great corn-drag which they were accustomed to draw over the straw to bruise out the wheat.

15, 16. *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.*

Truly, when mountains are beaten into chaff, and blown away with the winnowing fan, there is room for rejoicing and magnifying God. If there were no difficulties, there would be no victories. If we had no trials, we should have no tests of Jehovah's strength; but out of our afflictions we get our joys. The deeper our sorrows, the higher our exultations when God helps us through them.

17 *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.*

What a blessed promise that is! God thinks of poor and needy men. When they are in their greatest extremity, with nothing to quench their thirst, and they are ready to die, then he is pleased to make the rocks run with rivers, in order that they may be supplied.

18. *I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.*