

THE CHARIOTS OF AMMINADIB NO. 1155

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”
Song of Solomon 6:12.*

WE cannot be quite sure at this date what these chariots of Amminadib were to which the inspired poet here refers; some suppose that he may have alluded to a *person* of that name who was renowned, like Jehu of old, for his furious driving. Therefore it might have been familiar at the time, and afterwards have become proverbial to speak in metaphor of the chariots of Amminadib. The conjecture seems harmless, still it is only a conjecture, and cannot be verified. It is quite possible, however, that our translators may have retained as a proper name a conjunction of two words, which taken separately, are capable of being interpreted. You remember the word “Ammi” as it occurs in the prophet Hosea? “Say unto your brethren, Ammi,” which signifies “You are My people,” even as before He had said, “Call his name Loammi, for “You are not My people.” The one word Ammi, thus stands for “people,” and the other word, “Nadib,” means “willing,” so that the two united may be rendered “willing people”—“like the chariots of a willing people.” Or the words may be read, I think, more correctly, “The chariots of the princely people”—the princely chariots, the chariots of the prince. Some have understood them to mean the chariots of God, of the people that surround the great Prince, Himself, that is to say, the chariots of the angels, according as we read, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” In this case the figure would be a very striking one—“Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of the attendants upon the great King; I was like the cherubim themselves, all aglow with consecrated fire.” In whatever way the critical point is deciphered, the practical solution appears to be this—the writer’s soul was quickened because full of life, full of energy, full of might, full of spirit, and full of princely dignity, too; and not only stimulated to a high degree, but also elevated, lifted up from dullness, indifference, and apathy—“Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”

To whom does this text refer? Probably those of us who would never raise a doubt about the Song being a dialogue between Christ and the spouse—a matter we have no intention to canvass just now, as *we take it for granted*. We might find no small difficulty in determining to which of the two sacred personages this speech belongs, whether it was to Solomon or to Shulamite (the masculine or the feminine variety of the same name)—the Prince the husband, or the princess the spouse—whether, in a word, it was Christ or the Church. There is very much to be said for its being Christ Himself that is speaking. You will notice in this chapter that, from the 4th verse, He has been referring to His Church. “You are beautiful, O My love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me,” and so on. He is speaking of His Church in to the 10th verse. “Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” Then the 11th verse proceeds, “I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine nourished, and the pomegranates budded. Before I was even aware, My soul made Me like the chariots of Amminadib.” May it not be the Lord Himself who is speaking here?

We may entertain the question for a moment without absolutely fixing upon this as its proper solution. If it refers to Christ, it means just this—that He had been, for a while, away from His people; they had grieved Him and He had hid His face from them. Out of His very love and faithfulness He felt bound to chasten them, by hiding from them the brightness of His countenance. But He began to think tenderly of His people—His heart turned towards His Church, and while He was thinking of her, He saw such beauties in her that His soul was melted with her charms. Oh, what an extraordinary thing that He

should see loveliness in His poor imperfect church! And He saw such a loveliness about her, as her image rose up before His face, that He said, “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes.” “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And then, still musing upon her and coming into her garden, and seeing the various graces like plants and flowers in their different stages of development, His heart began to grow warm again towards her and all that concerned her! It had never really been cold—it only *seemed* so in the deviation of His accustomed manner.

But, like Joseph before his brethren, He could not refrain any longer. When He saw some of His people budding with desires, others bursting into the realization of those desires; when He saw some like ripe and mellow fruit upon the bough, ready for heaven; when He saw others just commencing the divine life, He was charmed to be in the garden of nuts, and before He was even aware, He found He must be with His people—He must return in the fullness of His love to His Church! Not her beauties only, but the kindling of His own soul began to stir Him; His free grace sought free hope; His infinite love became more than a match for the temporary prudence that had made Him hide His face, and, swift as the chariots of Amminadib, did He speed back to His people to let them see Him again—to let them enjoy His fellowship again! There are other Scripture passages where the Savior is spoken of as being like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether, or division, because He is willing to come to His people; so willing to make matters up with them, and end the days in which they mourn because the Bridegroom is absent. When He has hidden His face for a while out of love for them, and out of desire to reveal to them their faults—I say again, He is so willing to blot out their faults once more, and to return to them again with mercies—that His return is compared for swiftness and irresistibility to the motions of the chariots of Amminadab!

It is a delightful thought that if communion between our souls and Jesus is suspended, it is not because He takes pleasure therein; His delights are with the sons of men; He a thousand times invites His chosen to abide in Him, to continue in His love, and to remain in His company. In this Song He cries again and again, “Come with Me, My spouse.” This should encourage us to seek Him for renewed love-tokens, however serious may have been our departures from Him, and however dark our prospects under the hiding of His face. If He who is the aggrieved party is eager to be reconciled, the matter is easy and we may at once rise to the blessed condition from which our sin has cast us down! Jesus longs to embrace us! His arms are opened wide—do not our hearts warm at the sight? Do we not at once rush to His bosom and find a new heaven in a fresh sense of His boundless love? Why hesitate? What possible cause can there be for abiding in darkness? Lord, we fall upon Your bosom and our joy returns!

Not that I intend to adopt that view as the groundwork of our present reflections. It appears to me that without the slightest degree of twisting the passage, or deviating from an honest interpretation, we may understand that this is the language of the *Church* concerning Christ. If so, Christ’s words conclude at the end of the 10th verse, and it is the Church that speaks at the eleventh. There is not an instance in the whole Song, as far as I can remember, of the Prince, Himself, speaking in the first person singular. Therefore, this would be a solitary exception, or else, following the current plan, where the same pronoun is used; the Church is speaking to Christ and telling Him of herself. “I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded. Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Taking the text, then, as referring to the *Church* in particular and more generally to the Lord’s people, there will be *four observations* which we would pointedly make and prayerfully meditate. May God bless us, now, in fulfilling this purpose!

I. Our first observation shall be this: What is most needed in all religious exercises is THE MOTION, THE EXERCISE OF THE SOUL. “Before I was even aware, my soul made me”—or my soul *became*—“like the chariots of Amminadib.” Soul-worship is the soul of worship, and if you take away the soul from the worship, you have killed the worship—it becomes dead and barren. Let us turn over that well-known thought. It may benefit us if we look at the many sides of it. There are professors in this world who are perfectly content if they have gone through the mechanical part of public devotion. If they have occupied their seats, joined in the hymns and the prayers, and listened to the preaching, they go away quite content and easy. They would not like to be absent from the solemn assembly, and their

conscience would prick them if they neglected the outward ordinances; and having gone through them and complied with the accustomed form, they are perfectly content with themselves—and think they have done that which is lawful and right, comely and excellent.

Now, it is never so with the child of God. If his soul is awakened from the torpor of death, and his sensibilities quickened into the vigor of life, he will feel that unless in the song he has *really* praised God in strains of gratitude with emotions of thankfulness, he has rather mocked his heavenly Father than acceptably adored Him! He knows that in prayer, if it is not the *soul* that speaks with God, it is but the carcass of prayer, destitute of the sweet savor which can find acceptance with God, and of the sweet satisfaction that can bring refreshment to one's own breast. When he hears the word preached, he longs to feel it penetrate his *heart*, even as the rain soaks into the soil, and if he cannot so receive the truth of the gospel when it breaks on his ears as the engrafted word that saves his soul, and so feed upon it as the bread of life which nourishes his soul, he goes away sad at heart, deploring that while others were feasting at the banquet, he was there without appetite, and had not the pleasure or the profit which they derived. Beloved, in our public services we ought to account nothing truly and rightly done which is not done with the *heart!* That is one reason why in this Tabernacle we have tried to lay aside everything of outward show or external form which might distract the thoughts or disturb the simplicity of waiting on the Lord. As far as I can, I try to avoid the use of all symbols, except the two which Scripture has ordained—lest the symbol should tempt you to rest satisfied with itself, as I believe it generally does, and so prevent your reaching the Lord with your heart. We try to lay aside everything that would at all touch your *senses* in the worship; anything which appeals to the ear in the way of sweet music; anything of the aesthetic that would appeal to the eye. If you do not worship God with your *souls*, I hope you will get tired of our fellowship!

Yet, be it confessed, I painfully feel that it is almost as easy *not* to worship God with the bald plainness of Quakerism, as it is not to worship God with the studied pomp of ritualism! In any form, or without any form of worship, the amount of *real* devotion must be measured by the quantity of *soul* that is in it—provided the quality is pure and sincere! If the soul is there in the full exercise of its powers and passions, knowing what is revealed, and feeling what is inspired, I believe God is gracious to pity and forgive a thousand mistakes in outward fashion and skill of execution! The preacher's modulation may be faulty, and the people's singing may be ill-timed to barbarous tunes without peril of the unpardonable sin. But if the soul is lacking, though you should have worshipped according to the pattern given on the mount, and have never had a word uttered or a sound made but such as, in itself, would be accredited by men and acceptable with God had it been quickened by the Spirit, yet without that divine Spirit, which alone can give force and fervor to the human soul, it is all null and void! I think every genuine Christian knows it is so and feels it is so. He says, "My heart cries out for God, for the living God!" Nor can he be satisfied unless he finds God and draws near before Him. As in public worship, it is precisely the same in our own private and personal transactions with the Most High. The religious *worldling* will say a prayer when he wakes in the morning, and perhaps, unless he is out late, or too sleepy at home, he will have a bit of prayer at night, again, in the way of the repetition of some collect, or something which he has learned by rote. And very likely he has family prayer, too. It is not so much a custom as it was, but there are some who think they cannot go through the day unless they have what they call, "prayers."

But mark how the Christian prizes *private* prayers above everything that has to do with the ordering of his daily habits! And look how he esteems family prayer to be a necessity of every Christian household! At the same time he is not content because he prays for a few minutes unless he draws near to the Lord; he is not satisfied because he gathered his children together and read the Scriptures, and prayed with them, if, on adding up the sum total of the day, he is compelled to say, "It was heartless worship! When I awoke it was heartless worship; when I gathered my children and my servants it was the same. And it was sleepy, heartless worship when I knelt by my bedside and professed to seek the Lord at nightfall." If it *is* heartless it is unacceptable! God cannot receive it! If we have not thrown our heart into it, depend upon it, God will never take it to *His* heart and be pleased with it. Only that prayer which comes from our heart can get to God's heart; if we pray only from the lips, or from the throat, and not low down from the very heart of our nature, we shall never reach the heart of our Father who is in heaven. Oh, that we may be more and more scrupulous and watchful in these things! In the diary of Oliver

Heywood, one of the ejected ministers, he often says, "God helped me in prayer in my chamber and in the family." And once he writes thus—"In my chamber this morning I met with more than ordinary incomings of divine grace and outgoings of heart to God." I am afraid we may get satisfied with ourselves, especially if we are regular in private Scripture reading, private prayer, family prayer, and public prayer. Instead of being satisfied with these exercises, we ought to be weeping over them and deploring the formal and heartless manner in which we are prone to discharge them. Be it always remembered that we do not pray at all unless the *soul* is drawn out in pleading and beseeching the Lord. *Si nil curarem, nil orarem*, said Melancthon, "Were I without cares, I should be without prayers."

Now, perhaps you may know a friend of yours who thinks himself a poet. He can make poetry at any time, all the year round! Just pull him by the sleeve, and he will make you, very soon, a verse or two at the spur of the moment to show the readiness of his wit and the versatility of his talent! Yet I dare say you think that he is about as far off from being a poet as a sparrow is from being an eagle! You know if he were a poet, he would not be able to command the glow of imagination at one time, and at another time he would hardly be able to control it; he would sometimes have a "divine melting" upon him, as some call it, and then noble thoughts in appropriate words would flow from his pen; otherwise he would be just as dull and insipid as ordinary mortals. He would tell you indignantly that he could not write verses to order like those who scribble rhyme to advertise a tailor's wares. "Unless the inspiration comes upon me," he would say, "I cannot compose a line!" In like manner, a man cannot always pray—and the man who pretends he can, only utters jargon! He never prays at all, as the other never makes poetry at all. Prayer is a divine art; it is a thing which needs the inspiration not of the muses, but of the Spirit of God, Himself, and it is when the Spirit comes upon us with divine force and makes our soul like the chariots of Amminadib that we can pray! And at other times when that Spirit is not with us, we cannot pray as we did before. Every living child of God knows this! We must measure our prayers by the state of soul that we were in.

Take another illustration from the painter. One person, who thinks himself a painter, can paint any day you like anything you ask him—a mountain, a river, a horse, an insect, or a flower; it is all the same to him. He takes a brush and soon produces something which ordinary people might think to be a picture, but send that daub of his to the Royal Academy, and they will tell you that it may do for a tea tray, but not for the walls of a gallery! But the man that *can* paint, how does he mix his colors? The great painter will tell you that he mixes his *brains* with his colors, and when he takes his brush and dips it into the paint, he lays it on with his *soul*. In a great picture, such as sometimes we have seen by a Titians, or a Raphael, it is not the color, but the man's *heart* that has got out onto the canvas! Somehow he has managed to drop his brush into his soul! That is real painting; and so it is with prayer. The most humble man that prays to God with his soul understands the fine art of prayer; but the man who chants a pompous liturgy, or repeats an extemporaneous effusion, has not prayed; he has dashed off what he thinks to be a picture, but it is not a picture, it is not a prayer. Had it been a prayer it would have had a palpable inspiration in its light and shade. A painting may consist of few lines, but you will see the painter's hand in it; and a prayer may consist of only half a dozen words, but you can see the *hand of God* in it! The formality *repels* you in the one case—the vitality *attracts* you in the other!

So we will come back to the proposition with which we started. We can only pray according to the proportion in which our soul puts forth its force and feeling; and it is the same with praise. We have praised God up to the amount of soul that was in the sense as well as in the sound, be it with an organ or without an organ, with good music or with groans that cannot be uttered. We may have praised God either way, but only if our *soul* has been in full swell; with every kind of religious exercise, the *soul* is the standard of the whole compass of worship!

II. We proceed to a second remark. **SOMETIMES IT HAPPENS THAT THE HEART IS NOT IN THE BEST STATE FOR DEVOTION.** If religion is a matter of soul, it cannot always be attended to with equal pleasure and advantage. You can always grind a barrel organ; it will invariably give you the same discordant noise which people call music; but the human voice will not admit of being wound up in the same fashion, nor will it for the most part discharge the same monotonous functions. The great singer finds that his voice changes, and that he cannot always use it with the same freedom. If the voice is a delicate organ, how much more delicate is the soul!

The soul is continually the subject of changes. Ah, how often it changes because of its contact with the body! If we could be disembodied, oh, how we would praise God, and pray to Him! “The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.” I sat among some brethren the other day who were devout, and I tried to be, but I had a splitting headache. I do not know whether you could pray under so grievous a disability—let me confess to you that I could not. At another time, not long ago, I was one of a solemn assembly, when various disturbances occurred in the room; somebody getting up and others coming in late, as some of you do, and I could not get into a right frame as I ought to have done. Little things will affect little minds and our minds, many of them, are little! In that case I could not pray because my mind was being distracted and my attention was being taken away. Such distractions frequently happen, and they bitterly remind us of our infirmities. The apostles, themselves, fell to sleeping when they ought to have been praying; and under Paul’s preaching, Eutychus went to sleep, and Paul never blamed him! He died as the result of it, but he got raised again from the dead, so I suppose there was no fault in him. We may sometimes, without any willfulness on our part, as a necessary result of the weakness of our nature, or the stress of our toil and care, have brought ourselves into a condition in which we cannot feel like the chariots of Amminadab—and it is no use for us to attempt it! The body affects the soul materially, and a thousand outside agencies will affect our mental susceptibilities.

I have known persons come into this Tabernacle who have, perhaps, been annoyed with somebody in their pew, or somebody outside. It ought not to be so, but it is so. A little fly buzzing about one’s face—as small a thing as that—will disturb one’s devotion so that you cannot pray as you would and as you desire. And then, alas, our sins are a much more serious hindrance to our devotion! A sense of guilt puts us into such a state that we cannot be bold in our faith and childlike in our confidence when we appear before God. Perhaps we have been angry; how can we come before the Lord calmly when our spirit has just been now tossed with tempest? Probably we have been seeking the world and going after it with all our might; how can we suddenly pull up and put all our strength into a vigorous seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness in a moment? It is possible, too, that there is a sick child at home, or a wife lying suffering, or serious losses and crosses about business and domestic affairs. Perhaps one has a very heavy heart to bring before the Lord. Now God’s grace can help us to overcome all these things, and can even make our souls like the chariots of Amminadab! We need divine grace for such emergencies. The soul, in its different phases and states, has need of help from the sanctuary to which it repairs. “Well,” perhaps one here will say, “I always do what I think right every Sunday in much the same manner; I always pray the same, and I don’t know but what I can always sing God’s praises the same.”

Yes, let me answer our good friend, I have no doubt of your thorough sameness, or of your habitual self-content. If you were to ask one of the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral how it felt, I have no doubt it would say that it always felt the same because it never had any feeling! Appeal to *anything* destitute of life, and you will find that it has no change; but where there *is life*, and that which is intensely delicate—*spiritual life*—and where it is placed in circumstances so hostile to it as the circumstances which surround us here, there, I say, you will find that not only the revolutions of the seasons, but the variations of the temperature affect it. And every man who has this life in him experiences such changes. We have read of those who have *no* changes—and therefore they do not fear God. The fact that a believer cannot, at all times, draw near to God as his spirit would desire, becomes accordingly the key which interprets to him the grace and goodness whereby he sometimes gains access after a manner that surprises and delights his spirit.

III. This leads cheerfully up to our third observation—THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN OUR HEART IS SWEETLY MOVED TOWARDS GOD. “Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Have you not proved welcome opportunities when all your thoughts have been quickened, enlivened, and stimulated to activity in the highest degree about your highest interests? We have ceased to moan—

*“Our souls, how heavily they go
To reach eternal joys,”*

and we have been all wings, and could soar and mount aloft like David! We could have danced before the ark of God for very joy! And if any had said to us that we might fall by our enthusiasm while we seemed vile by our hilarity, we would have replied that we purposed to be viler still! All within us was

awake—there was not a slumbering faculty! Our memory told us of the goodness of the Lord in days gone by, and our hopes were regaled by His mercy which we had not tasted yet, but which was made sure to us by promise and brought near to us by faith. Our faith was active and bright of eye; our love, especially, shed a clear light over all our prospects. Oh, we have had blessed times when our soul has been light and rapid as the chariots of Amminadib! And at such times we were conscious of great elevation; the chariots of Amminadib were those of a prince, and oh, we were no more mean and low, beggarly and groveling—we saw Christ!—and were made kings and princes and priests with Him!

Then we longed to crown His head; then we could have performed martyrs' deeds; then we were no cowards, we were afraid of no foes. We sat down at the feet of Jesus and thought everything little compared with Him! Suffering for His sake would have been a gain! And reproach would have been an honor! We had princely thoughts, then—large, generous, capacious thoughts concerning Christ and His people, His cause and His conquests—our souls were like the chariots of Amminadab! At the same time they were full of power, for when the chariots of Amminadib went forth, who could stop them? Who could lay his hand upon the reins, and turn the coursers as they went onward in their mighty tramping? Such was our spirit! We laughed at thoughts of death, and poured contempt upon the trials of life; we were “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Oh, what splendid times we have had when God has been with us! Do you remember when you had them? I remember, when newly converted, how full my spirit was of love and holy triumph, like the chariots of Amminadab! Yours, no doubt, were much like mine; the love of your espousals was upon you; with what pleasing rapture you embraced your Lord, and said, “I will never let You go!” Stronger is love than death or hell; you truly felt it to be so; you flamed and burned and glowed—and though in yourself you were like low brushwood—yet you were like the bush in the desert that burned with fire because God was in your soul! Do you remember that?

Well, since then in private prayer, you have sometimes had gracious access, and meditation has been added to prayer, and the love of Christ has come in upon you like a great flood tide and drowned everything in your soul except itself! There have been periods when a sense of the eternal, immutable, never-ending love of God—His electing sovereign favor, the love of God in giving His Son for you—have been upon your spirit with a mighty influence that has laid you prostrate for very joy! You could not speak because words were too poor to express the emotions of your soul! You had to feel the force of James Thomson's hymn of the seasons—“Come, then, expressive silence, muse His praise,” for you could not speak it! You know it has been so with you, sometimes! And has not it been so, sometimes, under the word, when you have been ready to stand up and clap your hands for joy? Have not I seen gratitude and exultation reflected on your faces, sometimes, when the Lord has been present in the preaching of the gospel, and the truth of God has come to you like marrow and fatness from the King's own hands, till Dr. Watts has proved to be a faithful interpreter of the very scene and circumstance that ravished your heart—

*“The King Himself draws near
And feasts His saints today!
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.”*

Oh, yes, in God's house you have known the days of heaven upon earth! Might I speak for the rest of you, I would pronounce the choicest periods of fellowship are those we have found at the Lord's Table. When the bread has been broken and the wine poured out down in the Lecture Hall, He has been with us in the breaking of bread! If ever we have come near to Christ, surely it has been in that blessed communion!

There are the windows of agate and the gates of carbuncle through which Christ comes to His people in the ordinances He has ordained. By His grace we will never slight them! We cannot! The Master puts such reality and fullness of joy into them—apart from Him they are idols. But with Him, when He is there, when we have the *real presence*—not the superstitious presence some speak about—but the *real presence* which His own Spirit imparts, and our waiting souls participate—ah, then we have said—

*“No beams of cedar or of fir
Can with His courts on earth compare,*

*As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me."*

Not infrequently, too, have I known that the Lord has appeared to His people and warmed their hearts when they have been working for Him. Some idle, indolent, sluggish professors who have used the ordinances have not found benefit in the ordinances because the Lord has intended to rebuke their sloth. But when they have got up and gone forth among the poor; when they have gone forth to visit the sick, the sorrowful and the dying, they have heard such delightful expressions from the lips of holy, suffering men and women, or felt their hearts so kindled by a sight of divine compassion in the midst of desperate poverty and gracious pardon for grievous sin, that a quickening has come over them! And whereas they did not seem to care before, whether souls were lost or saved, they have gone out into the world with zeal to win fresh trophies for the Messiah! Their hearts have been, by His grace, like the chariots of Amminadib through the benefits they have received from Christian service! A great many Christian people will never be happy, and never fully alive to the destinies that wait on their Redeemer till they get something to *do* to give them an interest in those mighty issues. The rule of the Christian life is, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." If you will not serve God as Christians, you shall not feed upon the sweet things of the kingdom to your own soul's comfort. A little more service and your soul would become like the chariots of Amminadib!

Beloved, there is no need that I should enlarge. I merely say this to bring up your grateful memories that you may thank God for what He has done. Remember whatever He has done in the past, He will do again in the future. When the Lord has come once to His people, He says, "I will see you again, I will come to you again, and your hearts shall rejoice." Of everything He has ever given you, He has got as much in store—and He is quite as able to give it to you now as He was before! You have never gone so high in joy but you may go higher still! You have never drunk such draughts from the well of Bethlehem as left the well empty—you shall drink of it again! Do not say, "I had those sweet times when I was young, but I shall never have them again." You shall have precious times again! Get back to your first love, dear brother, and dear sister—go forward to a higher love than ever you had, for God will help you say, "I look back and think—

*"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."*

Thank God for that ache! Bless God for the aching void! If your soul aches for God, He will be to your relief before long! Whenever a soul puts up a flag of distress at the masthead, he may be sure that Christ is on the lookout for just such a soul; He has thrown up the windows of heaven and wherever He sees a soul that does what is right and longs to find joy and reconciliation with God, He will come to it—and before long it shall be better for you than even the chariots of Amminadab—and more desirable!

IV. Our last observation is this—SOMETIMES THE SWEET SEASONS COME TO US WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM. "Before I was even aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Some poor hearts do not reckon ever to have these joys again; they say, "No, no; they are all gone. The last leaf has blown from the tree; the last flower has faded in the garden. My summer is past; it is all over with me!" That is the bitter complaint and the hollow murmuring of *unbelief!* But the Lord for whom you wait can suddenly appear—and while you are saying hard things of yourself, He can refute them with the beams of His countenance! Even at this very moment you may stand like Hannah, a woman of sorrowful spirit, feeling as if you would be sent away empty. Yes, and God's servant, himself, may address you with rough words as Eli did her, and may even tell you that you are drunk when it is deep grief that enfeebles your steps and chokes your voice—and all the while the Lord may have in store for you such a blessing as you have never dreamed of! And He may say to you, "Go your way, My daughter; I have heard your petition, your soul shall have its desire."

Before I was even aware, while my unbelief led me to think such a thing impossible, You have made me like the chariots of Amminadab! "Before I was even aware," as if it came upon me almost without my own consent! Glad enough I was when it did come, but it took me by surprise; it led me captive.

Now, is not that the way that the Lord dealt with you when you were not aware of it, when you had no reason to expect Him, when you found and felt yourself to be utterly lost, ruined, and undone? Did He not surprise you with His mercy and prevent you with His loving-kindness? Again, you are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow; there is nothing that leads you to expect a season of joy—you are just as empty and unworthy as you can well be. You feel as if your heart was of stone, and you cannot stir it, and you are saying, “I only wish I could enjoy the freedom that my companions have, and keep the solemn feasts with their holy gladness. But, alas, for me! I am afraid I have got to be a mere mechanical Christian without the lively instincts and lofty inspirations of spiritual worship.” Thus you are writing bitter things against yourself. Oh, beloved, the Lord is looking down upon you now as His son or daughter, as His own dear child! And He is about to surprise you with His infinite love! Let me give you one text to put into your mouth and take home with you. The Lord has said, concerning every one of His people, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you.” “Why, now, I am all covered over with spots and blemishes,” you say, “and no beauty!” But the Lord Jesus Christ has washed you with His blood, and covered you with His righteousness! Do you think He can see any imperfection in that? You are members of His body, united to Him! In Christ you are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. You are all spots in *yourself*, but He sees you as He intends to make you before He has done with you—and He can discern unspeakable beauties in you! “Oh,” you say, “does He think *that*? Surely, then, I see unspeakable beauties in Him! His love to me opens my eyes to see how dear a one He must be! Is He enamored of *me*? Has He given His whole heart to *me*? Did He prove His love to *me* by bleeding on the cross? Oh, then, I *must* love Him, if He will but let me! Shall such a poor worm as I am love infinite perfection? Oh, yes, I must, since infinite perfection deigns to love me! And since the Sun of Righteousness, in all His glory deigns to shine on my soul!”

You are beginning to warm already, I see you are! Before you are aware, your soul is making you like the chariots of Amminadab! And if you keep on with these holy contemplations, you will leave off all misgivings about your love to Him, so deeply absorbed will you be in musing on His love to you! You will forget all the while about your sin, while you remember the blood that has put that sin away—the perfect righteousness that has made you accepted in the beloved—and the everlasting covenant which, through grace, has put your feet upon a rock and saved your eyes from tears and your feet from falling! Engaged in such sweet soliloquies, before you are aware, your soul will make you like the chariots of Amminadab! May the Lord make it so! God grant that surprising grace may come likewise even to sinners, and lead them to Jesus, and compel them to look to Jesus. Then, while looking, faith will breathe in their spirit so that they will sing—

*“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart.
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground
And weep to the praise of the glory I’ve found.”*

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