

THE NEW SONG ON EARTH NO. 2424

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 4, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 17, 1887

*“He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:
many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”*

Psalm 40:3

THIS man who talks about his song, and seems to be very much struck with the fact that he has become a singer, was formerly a man of prayer. I doubt not that he was still praying while he was praising, but he began to pray before he began to praise. It is ill to go in the choir first—we must begin our spiritual experience at the “penitent form.” He who sings without having wept may have to weep, by and by, where he can never sing.

Listen to what this man's experience had been, “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” That is where God gets His singers—out of the place of praying and weeping. Where they learn to pray they begin to sing. Oh, yes, even in heaven itself, the sweetest voices that praise God and the Lamb belong to those who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.

Do not try to get the joy of Christ without first having sorrow for sin.

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*

This man, who says that God has put a new song in his mouth, began with a new prayer in his heart—“I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

Further, this man, who sings so well that he cannot help talking about it, was once in a very deplorable state where there was no singing for him, but God brought him up out of it. Hear what he says, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”

Nowadays, people do not seem to know much about that horrible pit. I wish they did. There are more gentle, quiet conversions—and I little care how men are converted so long as they are really converted—but after all, the old-fashioned sort of conversions wear best. Men who know from what they are saved, men who have felt the iron rod of the law, and have been crushed and broken beneath the millstones of conviction—these are they who appreciate “free grace and dying love” to the full, and speak of it, and sing of it. I do not find so much of this singing now and the reason is because there has been so little of the deep experience of which our good old fathers used to speak.

The psalmist says, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and therefore it is that this new song is in my mouth.”

*“Firm on rock He made me stand,
And taught my cheerful tongue
To praise the wonders of His hand,
In a new thankful song.”*

I. First, notice that we have **HERE A MAN WONDERING TO FIND HIMSELF SINGING**, for the text is evidently a declaration that God had put a new song into his mouth, and that it was a marvel even to himself. Here is, then, a man wondering to find himself singing, and it would not be difficult to find one like him here.

What makes you wonder so, my friend? Other people sing—why is it at all a wonder that you should? He answers, “It is a wonder that I should sing *because I have been so used to sighing*. Had you seen me, sir, when the arrows of God stuck fast in me, you would have heard many sighs, but never a song. If you had tracked me home, you would have found my pillow wet with tears. But I was no nightingale, I could not sing in the dark. I woke in the morning, almost sorry to think that I had to face the world again, and that I had my burden still to bear. But I chanted no morning hymn and I went about the world still burdened till night came on again. Those around me talked of vesper hymns, but I had no such hymns. I had my evening moans and groans, for sin was heavy upon me, and an angry God seemed to make the darkness about me a darkness that might be felt. Had you seen me then, you would not think it strange that I should be wonder and be a wonder to myself that I now sing.”

Oh, yes, dear hearers, if you have ever known the depths of sorrow for sin, you will be amazed to think that you can be as happy as you are because Christ has loosened the burden from your shoulder and made you free, saying, “Go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.”

Well, my friend, I can see why you are astonished at your singing. Is there any other reason? “Yes,” he answers, “if you had known me a little farther back, before I came under the hand of God and was awakened to a sense of sin, you would have known a fellow that could sing, but *the wonder now is that I can sing ‘a new song.’* I am glad, sir that you did not hear me sing in those days, for my songs would have done you no good. They were very light and trifling, sometimes lewd and sometimes profane. Oh, how I set my companions in a roar with my jests. And when I had a little drink in me, how I liked to thunder out some loose verses and bid the others take up the chorus. And ‘jolly good fellows’ were all of us said to be when those hymns of the devil were upon our tongues.”

Oh, you are that man, are you? Yet I heard you sing, just now, and I think you sang it from your heart—

*“My heart is resting, O my God;
I will give thanks and sing;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing.*

*“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet.*

*“I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see:
The hand that bled to make it mine,
Is keeping it for me.”*

Ah, now I wonder, too, that such a man as you once were should be singing such a song as that! O brethren and sisters, there are some of us here who must be wonders to ourselves when we think of what we used to be! Some of you forget the dunghills where you grew, but if you have any honesty in you, you cannot but feel the tear starting up between your eyelids at the recollection of how God has changed you.

What a miracle of mercy you are! Surely it took almighty power to make a saint of such a sinner as you were. The utmost bound of infinite love must have been reached in the case of some who are in this

house of prayer praising redeeming love, and wishing that they had a thousand tongues with which to shout the Savior's praise. Yes, friend, I can see why it is that you tell us as a wonder that a new song is put into your mouth. The time past well suffices us to have sung the songs of Belial—now let us sing unto the Lord with all our strength and tell all around what great things His grace has done for us.

Still, my friend, you who are so much wondering at yourself, you tell me that you marvel to find yourself singing because you so lately were sighing, and farther back, were singing such a different tune. Is there any other wonder in it? "Well, yes, sir, my greatest wonder is because I am singing a new song. *It is a totally new song*—it is new to me, for I knew nothing of it once. I ridiculed what I did not understand. I cast scorn on what I had not the candor to wish to know. I said that religion was all cant and that religious people were all hypocrites. I did not know this for a fact, but I said it, all the same. I did not want to know anything about Christ crucified and the Gospel of His grace. I said that these were only terms that were used by fanatical people and that had no meaning in them. And as to the songs of Zion, why, sir, I sometimes parodied them to give a little zest to my profane merriment. But as to singing them myself, I felt that could never be the case."

Yes, beloved, there are some who are now singing of free grace and dying love who, years ago, would not have believed it possible, even if a prophet of God had told them it would be so. They would have spat at any man who would have said, "And you, too, will take up the cross and follow the Nazarene."

Yet tonight they are singing a song altogether new to them. These low notes of penitence, the deep bass of confession, are all new to them—and these highest notes, the *jubilates* that rise even to the skies—are all new to them. None of this score did they ever read in their days of sin, they never tuned their harps to such psalms as this in the time of their unregeneracy. It is all new to you.

Do I not remember when it was all new to me? Yet I heard it when I was a child, I was never away from the hearing of it. But when I came to know it, it was just as new to me, nursed on the lap of piety, as it was to you who lived in the midst of a wicked world, for I was blind in the light as you were blind in the dark. I was deaf in the midst of music and you were only deaf in the midst of discord. There was but a slight difference between us after all, and truly, we do wonder to think that we should be singing a new song.

It is not only called a new song because it is new to us, but because it is so uncommon. Rich and rare things are often called in the Bible new. There is a new covenant, there is a new commandment. I will not quote the many things in Scripture that are called new because they are so rare.

And oh, the praises of God are indeed rich and rare! If an angel, fresh from heaven, were asked his judgment of the various kinds of music played or sung below, I know what he would say. Your finest operas and your noblest lyrics concerning things of time and sense would be but doggerel in his ears and discord to his heart. But the hymns in which we praise our dying, yet risen Lord—the psalms in which we exalt the God of heaven and earth—these would be music indeed to him, and he would write these down as truly sweet.

Yes, and so it is to us. Dull is the song that does not praise our Lord. But the burst of united psalmody, from a vast congregation that exalts Him, brings tears to our eyes, as Augustine says it did to his when he heard the singing at Milan. When first he entered the church there, to hear the many simple folk praise God touched his soul. But if it be not so—if the music is not to the praise of the Lord—there is nothing rich and rare in it for us. Oh, believe us, we have learnt a rare song now that we have learnt to praise the Lord our God!

And truth to tell, there is a wonder about our new song because it is always new. Do you ever tire—you who love your Lord—do you ever tire of Him? You who praise Him, do you ever weary of singing His praises? You may very well weary of me, poor creature that I am—I who have addressed you so many hundreds of times—but you never weary of my subject when I talk of Jesus.

You may very well weary of the monotony of any human voice, but you can never be tired of the many-stringed harp which is to be found in that one name, the name of Jesus. His name fresh? Oh, I

think it is newer to me now than when I first heard it. It may seem a paradox, but the Gospel is to me fresher the longer I know it.

Did not my heart leap at the sound of Christ's name nearly forty years ago? Yes, but not as it does now. The music of His name will refresh our soul in death with a new depth of sweetness. It is all new as you go on in Jesus.

You seem sometimes to fancy that you are coming to an end, but there is no end to this music. Did you ever sail up or down the Rhine? If so, standing in the steamboat you thought you were in a lake rather than in a river—and you wondered how you could proceed any farther. You turned a corner and the river opened up before you with a fresh stretch of beauty, and where it seemed to end again, the end was all a delusion, for it still went on and on.

So is it with the song which the Lord has taught us—it is always fresh and always new. We may make it say, as the poet made his brook to sing,

*“Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever;”*

and so does the sweet melody of Jesu's precious name. It is a new song, a new song altogether.

Yet again if you wonder that we call it new, let me remind you that it is new because it seems to have woken us up into a newness of life. I have seen men excited—look at them whenever there is an election—but there is a far better kind of excitement than that which is produced by politics. When a man comes to know Christ and to love Him, it wakes him up from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet.

We steady-going people, you know, try to be very serene and quiet, and our worship is apt to get terribly stiff and dull—but if we could let our souls have their liberty, if we could speak and sing as we feel—what a noise we should make sometimes! There would be hallelujahs and hosannas indeed, and it is wonderful that we can restrain them, for the Gospel of Christ somehow brings out of a man new faculties which he does not know of himself till a glorious breeze of everlasting life has blown through him.

Then odors which otherwise had lain asleep, odors such as God delights in, are poured forth on every side. This is indeed a new song, for it makes us new. God grant, dear friends, that many of you may so continually sing it that you may know what I mean—and a great deal more than I can say! That is a wonderful thing, then—a new man singing a new song.

There is a further wonder yet. My friend, you have been telling us that you marvel that you have a new song, what is it that makes you so surprised? You have told us much—tell us a little more. And he answers, “Well, sir, I wonder at my new song because *it is raised unto our God*—‘even praise unto our God.’”

It should not be, but still it is, a marvel when a man praises his God. We are by nature so averse to this sweet exercise that, when we come to do it, and to do it heartily, it is a marvelous thing. Look. We praise God's grace, we sing—

*“Grace! 'Tis a charming sound!
Harmonious to the ear!”*

and each saved man among us feels it to be so in his case.

We praise God's power. What power He has put forth in bringing us up out of our graves of sin and turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, by that same mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. Yes, every man whom God has saved praises His grace and His power.

The pith of the song is this—“praise unto *our* God.” You cannot praise another man's God. At least, there is no sweetness in such a song. But there is a blessed melody when it is “praise unto *our* God”—

our covenant God, the God who belongs to us, the God who by a perpetual covenant has given Himself up to us to be our possession forever—“praise unto our God.”

I like to have it put in the plural. My soul can praise my God, but the highest note is reached when many of us together can praise “our God”—yours and mine. We who are brethren in Christ, we who know each other and love each other, find a peculiar sweetness in our new song when it is “praise unto our God.” If you all knew the sweetness of bringing others to Christ, more of you would live for it, and be prepared to even die for it.

I have had some very happy days in my life, but my happiest times have been such as I had one day last week, when I shook hands with somewhere about a hundred persons who called me their spiritual father. It seemed to them to be quite a grand day to touch my hand, while to me—the tears standing in my eyes as I saw each one of them—it was as the days of heaven upon earth, for I had never seen all those people before.

Perhaps some of them had been in this house now and then, but I did not know them. They had read the sermons, and as I went from village to village, and found them standing at their doors, begging me to stop just to hear how such a sermon was “blessed to me,” and “my old father read your sermons and died in peace after reading them”—there, I could have died of joy, for this is the truest happiness we can have on earth.

Seek sinners, my brethren, seek their conversion with all your heart and soul. If you would be happy men and women, and would sing the sweetest song that could be sung on earth, let it be, “praise unto our God”—not yours alone, but the God also of those whom infinite mercy shall permit you to bring to the same dear Savior’s feet.

There is one more wonder about this song, and then I shall have finished what I have to say about this friend of ours. You tell us that you sing and that you sing a new song—what is the greatest wonder about that song? “Why, sir, to tell you the truth, I do not know which is the greatest marvel. There is a world of wonders in my singing this new song, but there is one point I have not told you, and that is this—‘*He hath put a new song in my mouth.*’”

Oh, I see, then—you did not learn it from anybody? You did not make it up yourself? “No, no, no. A thousand times, no. It was God that put it into my mouth.” Well now, when God puts a song into a man’s mouth, that is a grand thing, for the devil himself cannot get it out. If God puts a new song into a man’s mouth, he has a right to sing it and he ought to sing it—and he must sing it—therefore, let him sing it.

Magnify the Lord if He has done this great thing to you, if He has put this new song into your mouth. All that we ever do for ourselves never has the sweetness in it of that which God does for us. You may labor and toil and tug, and all the wage you get you may hold in the hollow of your hand—and it shall melt in the morning sun.

But if God shall give it to you of His free, rich, sovereign grace, it shall be within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever take it away from you. If God has put this new song in your mouth, that is the best thing you can tell us about it.

So, my good friend, I will ask you no more questions. Sing away, sing away, as long as ever you like, sing praise unto our God.

*“Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Fain would stop the joyful song:
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue.”*

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, we have here, dear friends, A MAN WHO IS RESOLVED TO KEEP ON SINGING, for you notice, he says, “He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto

our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” So that this man means to keep on singing. I must have you back again, old friend, and ask you why it is that you mean to keep on singing?

He answers, first, “*Because I cannot help it.*” When God sets a man singing, he must sing. Good Rowland Hill once had sitting on the pulpit stairs a person who sang with such a cracked, squeaking voice that it put the dear man out of heart. And this person with the cracked voice of course sang more loudly than anybody else.

So Mr. Hill said to him, while the hymn was being sung, “Be quiet, my good man, you make such a dreadful noise that you put us all out.” “Oh!” said the man, “I am singing from my heart, Mr. Hill.” “I beg your pardon, my friend,” said the preacher, “go on, go on, go on with your singing if it comes from your heart.” So we would not stop any man, whatever his voice is, if he sings from his heart.

But what is more, we not only say that we would not stop him, but we could not stop him if we wanted to do so. If, as men say, “murder wills out,” I am sure that grace will. You cannot put salvation into a bottle and put the cork in. It will burst the bottle, for it must come out. If God has put a song into your mouth, you must sing it. Therefore, again I say, sing away.

But my friend over yonder, do not sing before everybody—perhaps it would be casting pearls before swine. “Oh!” says he, “but I must. *I mean to sing before many.*” Why? “Well, I used to sing before many in my evil days. I was not ashamed to sing for the devil—when I ought to have been ashamed, I was not. And now that I ought not to be ashamed, I will not be ashamed, and I will sing. Besides, why should I be so tender and considerate of their nerves? They are not thoughtful about mine.”

The ungodly sometimes complain of us for preaching outdoors, they say that it disturbs them. Bless their dear delicacy! What a noise they make at night, sometimes, when they keep us from sleeping while they noisily declare that they, “won’t go home till morning”! Surely, we may sing as loudly as they do. And when we sing songs of Zion, we can well reply to them that, when they are quiet, and will suspend their music, we may consider when we will suspend ours.

Still, my friend, do you think that it is worth while to sing at this rate? “Yes,” says he, “I do, for *I believe that it is good for them to hear it.*” Do you? What good can it do them? And he answers me thus. “Look at your text, sir, and you will not need to ask me that question. What does your text say?” “Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” It is good to preach the Gospel, but it is better to preach and sing the Gospel.

I mean, dear friends, that if you and I, in our daily lives, were to sing the Gospel more—especially by a holy cheerfulness of character—we would bring the truth home to a great many who now turn aside from it, and do not feel its power. Sing of Christ your Lord, tell out His love to you, tell out how you were converted, tell how He brought you up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay—and as you do it, others will long to experience the same deliverance and so will be drawn to the Savior by your sweet testimony to His grace.

There are many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there are many more sinners brought to Christ by the gracious tidings of His love than ever will be driven to Him by all the threatenings of His law. I do not know a better soul-trap than a happy Christian experience. This will catch them—therefore be sure to use it. Sing, sing, sing unto the Lord a new song. Sing His praise unto the ends of the earth, for many will see it, and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

If I had come here tonight knowing that there were persons here that were ailing, and were to say, “Now, listen. I will tell you how I suffered from your complaint,” you would be sure to attend to me. And if I then mentioned a certain remedy, and said, “I took it and I have experienced a very remarkable cure,” you would listen with both ears and you would ask, “Where is that remedy to be purchased?”

You would begin thinking whether you could get some of it tomorrow morning, especially if you were very ill yourselves as I had been, and you would go away thankful to think that you had met with someone who, through his own experience, could guide you to a perfect cure.

Well now, that is exactly what I want you to do with regard to yourselves, you who are sick of sin, and care, and fear, and grief. I, too, as a youth, was sick of sin, and I was made to feel it and to endure

great grief on account of it. I sought to be delivered from it. I gave up many things in which I had indulged and I hoped by self-denial that I should come to peace. But I did not, I was as far off as before I began.

I said that I would very diligently attend the means of grace and I did so. Thrice on the Sabbath I was found somewhere or other hearing the Word. But mere sermon-hearing brings no peace. Then I said that I would read good books. How I remember reading *Alleine's Alarm* and Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, and Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*. And how they ploughed me and brought tears into my eyes—but I found no rest to my soul by all the godly books I read—the best that could be read.

Whatever was proposed to me that looked likely to bring me rest, I was eager to try. I was willing, I am sure, to become a monk, or aught else beneath the sun that would promise peace to my spirit, for I wanted to be right and longed to be at peace with God.

At last, I found rest. The preacher pictured Christ upon the cross, bleeding for sinners. And he said, in his Lord's own words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." And I looked. It was all I could do—it was all I was asked to do—I looked. It was but a look, yet in that moment all my fears were ended, my doubts were solved, my burden was removed, and I, too, could say, "He hath put a new song in my mouth. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

Now, after trying and testing this salvation for a good many years—well nigh on to forty—I have only this to say of it, it is a simple salvation, but it is as sound as it is simple. It is fitted for the poorest of us, but it is as enriching as it is suitable to our poverty. The weakest may look to Jesus, but by looking he shall soon be ranked among the strongest.

He who is at death's door may look to Jesus crucified, but the life that look brings is life everlasting, which shall never die. There is the remedy and I have tried it. That is all I can say to you, except that I beg you to try it yourselves. Try it yourselves. Look to Christ. Look to Christ. Trust Jesus, that is all—trust, simply trust.

It does seem as if this could not be all, but it is. You with the broken heart, trust. You with the heart that will not break, trust to have it broken. You that are deeply penitent, trust—not in your repentance, however—but in Christ. And you that cannot repent, but wish to repent, look to Christ for repentance.

Trust. Trust. Trust, as the drowning man trusts to the life buoy, as the shipwrecked mariners trust to the lifeboat. Trust. Trust in God Almighty, incarnate in the bleeding Man of Sorrows, for it is God that hangs on the cross in the body of the Nazarene.

Trust thou in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary—and as surely as He lives, as surely as God lives, you shall live, and live forever. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that Word shall never pass away, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." May you have it tonight! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 33 AND 1 JOHN 1

Psalm Chapter 33. Verse 1. *Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.*

False gods were worshipped with dolorous sounds, accompanied by cutting with knives and with lancets, but our God is the happy God, and He would have His people happy. "Rejoice in JEHOVAH, O ye righteous." The praises of God are very beautiful when they are sung by holy people, "for praise is comely for the upright."

But the praises of God on the lips of godless men are altogether out of place. I wonder how Christians can allow those to lead their praises in the sanctuary who never can from their hearts praise God. They who sing to the worldling all the week should not be employed to sing to the God of the holy

on the Sabbath, surely. "Praise is comely for the upright." Hymns and psalms sung by the ungodly are but as sweet spices laid upon a dunghill, but "praise is comely for the upright."

2-3. *Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.*

Under a dispensation of types and shadows, the use of musical instruments seemed to be necessary and suitable, but in the early Christian church, in her purest ages, these things were discarded as tending towards Judaism. And at this day, the sweetest singing in the world is heard in the assembly which utterly abjures the use of every musical instrument.

Yet I believe that there is Christian liberty about these things, and for my part, I like to think of Luther with his lute and of George Herbert with his harp. If they were helped to praise God the better, let them have the music. Yet the singing is never sweeter than when it is all song, and there is no better music than that which comes from hearts and tongues that are alive, and that know what sounds they make, and wherefore they make them. Anyhow, let us sing unto JEHOVAH. Hang not your harps on the willows, suspend not your music. Praise God somehow, praise Him anyhow, but do praise Him.

4. *For the word of the LORD is right;*

Praise Him for His Word, then. It is truth, it is righteousness. If we had nothing else but the Bible for which to praise God, there would be reason enough for giving Him endless praise for bestowing upon us such a priceless treasure.

4. *And all his works are done in truth.*

Praise Him for His providence. There is never a mistake in what He does "All his works are done in truth."

5. *He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.*

Therefore praise Him. So good a God should not be without your gratitude.

6. *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

Praise your Creator, then, the Maker of the universe.

7-9. *He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*

These are simple but grand words. The work of creation was very wonderful, and it was all wrought by the word of the Lord. There were no angelic agencies. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

10. *The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*

They plot and they contrive, but he baffles them. Men may think and scheme as they will, but God has His way, after all.

10-11. *He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

His decrees stand fast. Still JEHOVAH reigns, and still He must reign forever and ever.

12. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*

There is the reason why they are blessed, it is all owing to God's electing love, "the people whom he hath chosen." If God has chosen them, they are blessed people indeed. Whom He determines to bless, none can effectually curse.

13. *The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.*

As we look out of a window, and see the people passing in the street below, "He beholdeth all the sons of men," whether at the pole or at the equator. None are hidden from His omniscient eye.

14-15. *From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike;*

Not that their hearts are alike, but it means that He only fashions all their hearts. They were all made by Him. There is no understanding so great but He made it, and there is no mind so feeble but still He made it, “He fashioneth their hearts.”

15-16. *He considereth all their works. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host*

See what vast companies of soldiers Darius gathered together, yet Alexander smote them, and Napoleon led into Russia more than half a million of men, yet they melted away like snow.

16. *A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.*

Sooner or later, he dies, however strong he is.

17. *A horse is a vain thing for safety:*

It throws its rider, or falls upon him, or is killed with him.

17-18. *Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy,*

Beautiful expression! I always like that mixture of fear and hope. An old fisherman used to compare it to his net. “Fear,” said he, “is the weight that sinks it and hope is the cork that floats it.” To make a perfect character, there must be both fear and hope. The man that never fears may begin to fear, but he that is all fear is a miserable creature. God help him to begin to hope!

19. *To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.*

When others die of want, the Lord will take care of them that fear Him. I remember a story of the siege of Rochelle, when the city was in such straits that the people had to eat cats, and dogs, and rats, and all manner of filthiness. There was one Christian woman, who, having some stores, fed the poor therewith, whereat her friends said she was a fool, for she would soon be starving. They asked, “Who is to take care of you when all is gone?” She answered, “The Lord will provide for me.”

At last her stores were exhausted. She went to beg of her friends, but they refused her. She was nearly famished when, strange to tell (as we put it), some one, unknown to her, shot down a sack full of wheat at her door. She never knew who it was, and then she said to her friends, “God has provided for me,” and while others died she lived, for she had practiced holy charity.

She had feared God, and given to her neighbours, she had not selfishly hoarded what she had, and the Lord rewarded her. Let me read these two verses again, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

20. *Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.*

Notice the three “ours.” Personal possession is the very soul of piety—all else is mere verbiage. Not, “What hearest thou?” but, “What hast thou?” Not, “What canst thou talk about?” but, “What dost thou possess?” That is the thing, “Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.”

21. *For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.*

If you do but trust in His holy name, you shall one day rejoice in Him. Trust Him in the dark and you shall see the light. Trust Him in famine and you shall surely be fed.

22. *Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.*

Let us each one pray that prayer now, “Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.” Amen.

Now turn to the first chapter of the first general epistle of John, that you may see what an apostle had to say concerning joy.

1 John Chapter 1. Verse 1. *That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

You know who that is, who it is that John had heard, and seen, and looked upon, and handled, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

2-3. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

The Father delights in His risen Son, no more to suffer and to die, having accomplished all His work—and I am sure that we have fellowship with the Father in that rejoicing. Then think what is the joy of Christ, who has passed through the shades of death, and risen from all the gloom of the sepulchre no more to die. I trust, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, that we have fellowship with Him, for we also have risen with Him unto newness of life.

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

“There,” the apostle seems to say, “if you have doubts, they will kill your joy. Doubt is a great joy-killer, but we have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have handled Him who is the fountain of all true joy. Let no doubts come into your hearts, for these are well-attested facts of which we speak.

“We live still,” said John—though, perhaps, when he wrote, he may have been the last survivor of the eleven—“We live still, by our testimony concerning Christ, to confirm your faith, that your joy may be full.”

5-7. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

That is, if we walk in the brightest light we can ever know, and if our fellowship with God is the highest that can be enjoyed this side heaven, we shall still need the cleansing blood of Jesus—and blessed be God, we shall still have it, and we shall still find that it “cleanseth us from all sin.”

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

We are walking in darkness when we thus talk of light. It is easy for a blind man to talk of light though he cannot see it. And there are some who boast of very superior light who, nevertheless, are so much in the dark that they cannot even see their own sin.

9-10. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

The Lord bless to us the reading of His Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—720, 729, 708

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