

A Message from God for Thee

A Sermon

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"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins."—[Lamentations 4:22](#).

EVERY SABBATH we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel have a voice to universal manhood: the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway, and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters, that the law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, that the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice. While there are texts which are universal, and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are at the same time a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished, and whose sin is pardoned; or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom resteth the curse of God, and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right-hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind prophet of old, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings;" but I have also to say, "Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without." According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will *try to deliver in their order*; we shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—*Why the difference?* and then we will *press upon each character the force of the message*, that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. Our FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity."

1. We find, at the outset, a *joyous fact*. Read it with glistening eyes ye to whom it belongs—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in his anger had put them from him, felt his repentings kindle together, and considered that they had suffered enough; "For she hath received at the Lord's hand," said the prophet, "double for all her sin." Brethren, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. Remember that Sin must be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment, ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if he had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if he had no justice. To gain a just view of the character of God you must perceive all his attributes as infinitely developed; justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin *must* be punished. This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Sin must be punished" is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire; and, as the damned in hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated or foregone, or that justice has had a sop given it to close its mouth. The consolation is far more sure and effectual; say ye unto the daughter of Zion that "the punishment of her iniquity is *accomplished*." Christ hath for his people borne all the punishment which they deserved; and now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more.

Sin deserved God's wrath; that wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand thou aside!" said Jesus—"Stand thou aside, my spouse, my Church, and I will suffer in thy stead." Down dashed the drops of fire; the burning sleet swept terribly over his head, and beat upon his poor defenceless person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden, and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it be again called forth, but it was annihilated, it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the believer since Christ hath died for him. In his dying, our Lord has satisfied the divine vengeance even to the full. Then this, too, *must satisfy our conscience*. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but crieth out for something more. Like the horse-leech it saith—"Give, give, give." Until you

can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let thy conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied; the law is not despised: it is honored; it is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that thy punishment is accomplished, thou mayest come with boldness unto him, for no guilt doth lie on thee. Thou art accepted in the Beloved; thy guilt was laid on him of old, and thou art now safe."

In thy Surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With his spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

Come thou boldly unto God, and rejoice thou in him.

Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight, how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder I see hmt in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for heaven. He sweats "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It is not the sweat of his brow only, but "All his head, his hair, his garments, bloody be." God is smiting him, and laying upon him the punishments of our iniquities. He rises, with his heart exceeding sorrowful even unto death. They hurry him to Pilate's judgment-seat. The God of heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed, and falsely accused before the tribunal of his recreant creature. He is taken by the soldiery to Gabbatha, they strip, they scourge him; clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from his back. They buffet him, and bruise him with their blows; as if his robe of blood were not enough, they throw about his shoulders an old cloak, and make him a mimic king. Little knew they that he was the King of kings. He gives his back to the smilers, and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair, he hides not his face from shame and spitting. Oh! what shall be said of thee, thou Son of man? In what words shall we describe thy grief? All ye that pass by behold and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto his sorrow that was done unto him! Oh God, thou hast broken him with a rod of iron; all thy waves and thy billows have gone over him. He looks, and there is none to help; he turns his eye around, and there is none to comfort him. But see, through the streets of Jerusalem he is hastened to his death; they nail him to the transverse wood; they dash it into the ground; they dislocate his bones; he is poured out like water; all his bones are out of joint; he is brought into the dust of death; agonies are piled on agonies; as in the classic fable the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to heaven, misery is piled on misery, what if I say hell on hell! but Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last he reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" was the sum total of all human

misery; the gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus he dies! Say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. "It is finished!" Let the angels sing it; hymn it in the plains of glory, tell it here on earth, and once again say ye unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning.

2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our discourse—Is the punishment of *mine* iniquity accomplished? *Let us see to whom this message is sent.* Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes and with your hearts, for this promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history therein.

In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—"*From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed.*" We should have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly.*" At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away, our merit is dissolved like the rime of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile; that which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes, and all his glory is trailed in the mire. My hearer, has all thy self-righteousness been taken from thee? for rest assured thou art not this daughter of Zion unless thy beauty has all departed, and all thy boastful thoughts have been utterly slain.

Wonder of wonders! the eighth and ninth verses tell us "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned," and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that "*her filthiness is in her skirts.*" Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their unrighteousness becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight. Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true. The heart discovereth itself to be all wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, till it abhorreth itself before God. "O Lord, I am vile." "We are all together as an unclean thing." "We are laden with iniquity." Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed.

Look on, again, to the seventeenth verse, and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—"Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and *there is none to comfort her.*" So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord's Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their Church-goings and Chapel-goings. A formal, notional reli-

gion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the sole of their foot in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well; but now there is none to comfort them. These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground. Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the law; till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we have been led to an experimental acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities.

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings. In the eighteenth verse she says—"*The Lord is righteous*: for I have rebelled against his commandments." The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God's justice. Eternal punishment they cavil at; hell is such a bugbear to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just as sure, notwithstanding all their objections to it. But when the heart is really touched by divine grace, then it has no more to say for itself, but pleads guilty at the bar of God's great assize; and if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned." I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God. Come with the ropes about your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive.

Further still: in the first verse of the second chapter you find that *her prayer was not yet heard*—"How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!" Well do I remember the time in my own experience when I prayed in vain; when I bowed my knees and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a standard for all, but remember I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character. If thou hast been for months, ay, even for years, crying for mercy, and still hast not found it, let not this cast thee down, for to thee is this message sent this morning. Thou art this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say unto thee that "the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished." Thy prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it and Jesus offered it. God absolves thee, from heaven thy forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the word of the Lord, and rejoice therein. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Further: as her prayer was not heard, so *every place of refuge was broken down*. In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—"The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying, therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament: they languished together." Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as an heap behind which the Israelitish warriors might defend themselves were to be broken down. So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner's heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. "Peace, peace, where there is no peace," is the sinner's constant cry. Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner's confidences, till at last there is not one stone left upon another that is not thrown down; then the sinner yields himself a captive, and free grace leads him in triumph to the cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear hearer? If it be then, my sweet message is for you. "Go in peace, they sins which are many are all forgiven thee!"

Further still: this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of *deep humiliation*. Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence; they have cast up dust upon their heads: they have girded themselves in sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time; and, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them; and some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture; as face answereth to face in a glass so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition." Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you, to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

Furthermore: it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes here let loose against her, and her *grief exceeded all bounds* and prevented all comparison:—"What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring. That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!" Ye give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all thine enemies, thine own heart, and all the devils in hell should conspire against thee, yet to thee, even to thee, thus

saith the Lord, the God of hosts, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to *constant prayer*:—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him," and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide fast by the mercy-seat, and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany I was about to call it—

"Wealth and honor I disclaim,
Earthly comfortd, Lord, are vain,
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die."

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless; it falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ or else *I die.*" "I can no denial take." Again, and again, and again, the sound of its moaning goeth up before the Lord God of Sabaoth; its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks to-day. (Lord! open the ear that it may hear!) "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction, if the law has ever had its perfect work in you, you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you, and when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you; lay hold on it by faith; feed on it, live on it, and rejoice.

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is a *precious promise*. "I will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thou art in captivity now, but it is the last thou shalt ever have. Thou art sorrowing on account of sin, and troubled even to despair; but thou *art* now forgiven—not thou *shalt* be, but thou *art*; all the wrath was laid on Christ; there is none remaining upon thee; thou art forgiven, and thy captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let thy mouth be filled with laughter, and thy tongue with singing, for

the Lord hath done great things for thee. These convictions of thine shall never return again in their present terror; only do thou cling to the Rock of Ages, and no wave shall bear thee back into the deeps. Thou shalt go through the wilderness but once; thou shalt pass through the Jordan of a Savior's blood, and then thou shalt enter into Canaan and rest, for "we that have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for thee. All thy hell is past; Tophet burns not for thee, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon thee. All that thou deservest of the wrath of God, Christ hath endured, and there is not a drop remaining for thee. Come thou to the golden chalice into which God drained his wrath, and look at the sparkling wine of love which filleth it. Ah, how changed from what it once was. 'Twas full, and foul, and black; each drop was Tophet, and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it; to the very dregs he drained it; turning it upside down, he said, "It is finished!" and not a drop was left. Come thou, I say, to it, for it is not empty now; it is full again, but with what is it filled withal? 'Tis full to the brim and overflowing with love unsearchable, eternal, divine. Come thou and drink.

"Calvary's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace;
Count the purple drops, and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.
Now no more his wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head;
Justice now demands no more,
He hath paid the dreadful score.
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in the Saviours blood,
Zion O! how bless'd art thou,
Justified from all things now.

"I will take the cup of salvation, and will call on the name of the Lord." You may have troubles, but you will never have punishment; you may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath; you may go to the grave, but you shall never go to hell; you shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned; the Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head; you may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. "He will no more carry thee away into captivity." Thy punishment is all accomplished on another. Thou art free to-day; come thou forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, and brought out his people, and delivered them with his own right hand!

Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message; I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus saith the Lord unto thee—"I will visit thine iniquity." Unbeliever, thou who hast never felt thy need of Christ, and never fled to him, to thee he says, "I will visit thine iniquity." His justice tarries, but it is sure; his axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried; or if they be, they shall have a resurrection. Thy thoughts, thy words, thy deeds, shall all return in terror on thy head. Thou shalt begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On thy dying bed thy frail tenement shall creak, and thou shalt see the blazings of the furnace of fire through the rifts of thy crumbling cottage. When thou shalt lie a-dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of heaven stand about thy bed and summon thee to judgment. Thy cheek shall blanch, however brazen may now be thy brow. Then, strong man, thou shalt be bowed down, and thy loins shall be loosened, for when God dealeth with thee thou shalt feel his hand, even though thou wert girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then thou diest; thy death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Thy soul descends into the pit amongst thy kindred, and thou beginnest to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied him. Then shall thine oaths be all fulfilled then shall thy lustings and thy revellings come to thee in their true light. Then shalt thou hear ringing in thy conscience the echo of the divine sentence, "Thou deserves" all this, for God gave thee warning when he said "I will surely visit thee for thine iniquity." Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! ye dead and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Thy soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the great white throne is lifted up on high; the righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain; and, now, hark ye! hark ye! to a voice more dread than thunder—"Bind them up in bundles to burn them!—the drunkard with the drunkard; the swearer with the swearer: the careless, the proud, the self-righteous, each with each, and cast them into the furnace of fire." It is done, and where art thou now, sinner? Dost thou say of me this morning—"I knew that thou would speak not good but evil unto me?" Another day thou shalt bless thy stern reprover! Call me not thine enemy; it is thy sin that is thine enemy. I make not hell. I do but warn thee of it with a brother's love. Thou diggest hell thyself; thou thyself fillest it, and the breath of thy sins shall fan the fire. "The Lord of Hosts *will* visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it; hearken thou to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns thee. Beware, O careless soul, beware of forgetting God, lest he tear thee in pieces, and there be none to deliver thee. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to thee.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was *a mirthful one*. In irony

and sarcasm the prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked." There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God; there is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety; and what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah! daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for thy fine linen; there are ashes for all thine ornaments; thine earrings shall give place to everlasting tears-drops, and all thy beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay! Weep, all ye that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day cometh when he shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus saith the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should he then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt *very carelessly*, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come hither to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwelleth like an eagle in his eyrie, and he pounceth down upon his prey or ever his victim is aware? Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo! he dareth to look in the face of the sun, and he laugheth at the spear of the hunter; who shall bring him down?" Thus saith the lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit thine iniquity." "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Ye proud men and women, ye say, "Will God deal with us? Will he treat us as common sinners? Even if he should, we will not care; fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it be at Belshazzar's feast; we will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!" Thus speak ye, but thus saith the Lord, even as he said unto Moab—"I will bring down thy high looks. I will trample thee like straw is trodden for the dunghill, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."

More than this; it appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and *merriment over the sorrows of others*. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah! These drivelling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one—"I am a man of the world. I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like tremblings: why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of hell and of judgment—do you believe it? "No," says this man "I know nothing of your care; I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!" O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God liveth, the day shall come when thou shalt be trodden as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware ye, for when the Avenger cometh forth a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the

preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at, and called an old hypocrite for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark, and what think ye now of the prophet, what think ye now of the preacher of righteousness? Ye are swept away; the waves have covered you; a few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills, but the all-devouring waters reach you there. I hear your last shriek of awful anguish; there is not a single note of unbelief in it now; as you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the prophet was right and you were fools. To your death-beds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt to day; I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help thee! God help thee to repent! but heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is thy curse; God will visit thine iniquity upon thee!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, the border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges; I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment yet I pluck up heart again." Ah! daughter of Edom, God will visit thee for thine iniquity, and thy vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last; and so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings, and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, "*I will discover thy sins.*" Let every sinner here be afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin; He will discover it. It may be it was last night; 'twas in a very secret place, and you contrived so that none might track you; but the All-seeing One will discover your sin. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are rent, your masks are plucked away; the Revealer of Secrets cometh forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the house-tops. The day cometh when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is thy portion, daughter of Edom! Thy secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit thee!

III. The time expires, but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES?

The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was *sovereign grace*. The daughter of Zion had no right to pardon; she had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her, and had entered into covenant with Abraham concerning her, that he would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in his sovereignty, because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, he sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice; he sent it *because the daughter of Edom deserved it*. Sinner, when God says he will punish sin, thou mayest kick against it if thou wilt, but thy conscience tells thee thou deservest to be punished. God will not smite thee more than thou deservest, but let him only give thee as much, and wrath will come upon thee to the uttermost. Edom hath waxed proud; she hath been careless; she hath despised God; she is unbelieving; she repenteth not; therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it; it is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The scullions of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him. We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn; ridicule is the only answer they deserve; let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit, I may always say that we believe this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well, then, the punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will try and believe it," but believe it. Do not say, "I hope it is true;" *it is true*; believe it, and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in thy spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ; I shall never be carried into captivity any more; being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise him every day now that his anger has passed away for ever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation?

Object to Solomon and not to me; I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word, and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were; for do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the law sent for? To dog men to hell? No, but to be our pedagogue to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows, that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a pedagogue who with a stick, went round to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school. Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though he is a good and tender Master, that he employs the law to go round to our houses to whip us to himself, his peace, his great salvation. Ah! I would I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of to-day are meant to bring you from under the law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, thy doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that thou wouldest but believe this, and that thy heart were broken, for then we might come to thee again, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins."

May God bless the words of this morning, and unto his name be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.