

Good Cheer for Many That Fear

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." [Isaiah 35:4](#).

THIS is an exhortation which is addressed, not to one person, but to several. In the third verse you can see that the message runs, "Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." What, Lord? Is not one man sufficient for this task? Will not one of Your servants, when he repeats Your precious promises, be able to drive away the fears of Your people? Will not half a word be enough to put to rout their foolish, groundless suspicions and suppositions? No, they have need of many comforters. It is not enough, O Lord, that one should come and speak in Your name? No, "for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." We are a people of a stubborn will and of a wayward heart, O God. Too often do we wander from Your ways! It is well, therefore, that God has spoken thus, not simply to one of His servants, but to all those who love His appearing and rejoice in the certainty of His promises—"Say you, all of you"—for I may rightly supply the pronoun here—"say you to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."

Let me observe that in the original, the word for, "fearful," is, "hasty." Now, a hasty man is never a wise man. And equally true is it that a "fearful" man is never prudent. Fearful men are always hasty—they jump at conclusions. They say, with Jacob, "All these things are against me," because they cannot see to the end of the Lord's dispensations. They forget that He is full of pity and full of compassion. Circumstance or expediency is their guiding star. They seek to follow the track of the meteors which fly here and there across the midnight sky—they forget the pole-star of God's Truth and faithfulness. They go to sea without chart or compass and they are driven backwards and forwards by contrary winds! And even when there is no wind, they know not how to steer their ship. As you know, even in this world's affairs, a hasty man is constantly getting himself into trouble. He speculates in certain stocks and shares because some con man has told him that he can gain by doing so. And soon he hears quite a different story, some great disaster is about to come—he hastily believes the lie and is again deceived!

So is it with fearful souls—they are always doing this or that on the hasty impulse of an ill-drawn conclusion. Thus they are constantly misjudging their God, misusing His Word, misdirecting their own steps, bringing a world of trouble upon themselves and dishonor upon the name of their God! Fearful souls are hasty souls. They judge the Lord by feeble

sense, by the bitterness of the bud and not by the sweetness of the flower. They judge by the clouds of the morning, forgetting that the clouds may soon be scattered and that the sun may shine out brightly again. To them, then, that are of a hasty heart—to those who condemn themselves unjustly, who think that all things are against them and so become exceedingly fearful, say, "Be strong, fear not."

I am going, first of all, to mention some of the spiritual fears which have vexed the people of God at all times—fears from without which are associated with a belief of the Truth of God. Secondly, I will mention some fears from the feelings within. Then, thirdly, I shall try to excite you to get beyond these fearful things and to come up to the place of strength—the place of confidence and of full assurance.

I. First, then, I am to mention SOME OF THE GREAT TRUTHS CONCERNING WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE OFTEN FEARFUL.

How many there are, babes in Grace, who are troubled about election. 'Are we among the Lord's chosen ones?' is a question that they often ask. They would be glad enough if an angel could fly down from Heaven and make a solemn affirmation that he had read their names written in the golden page of the Lamb's Book of Life, but, since they cannot have this assurance, they question, and question, and question yet again! "Suppose I have not been chosen unto eternal life? What if my name was never engraved upon the hands or upon the heart of Christ? When the muster-roll of the redeemed is read at the Last Great Day, if my name should not be found on it, how can I bear that piercing thought? The dread surmise fills me with dismay!"

Now, to you who are trusting in Jesus, yet who have fears about your election, let me say, in God's name, "Be strong, fear not." That very Doctrine of Election which now appears to you to be like a lion in your way, shall prove, by-and-by, to be, indeed, a lion upon which you shall ride in glorious triumph! It is no enemy. Come and look it in the face and you shall find it to be your richest, dearest friend. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are as certainly elected as ever Peter and Paul were! If, as an empty sinner, Christ is all your fullness. If, as a naked soul, Christ's righteousness is your glorious dress—then be you assured of this—you would never have had the stream if you had not had an interest in the Fountain! You could never have had the fruit if you had not had a part in the Root! Inasmuch as you have the blessing of God's elect and the faith which is the common mark of them all, do not any longer question your election, but be bold to enter into this solemn mystery! Venture, now, to the heart of Christ. Trace the streams of Divine Love up to the eternal Fountain from which they spring, and say, with John Kent—

"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood—
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God,

And in His sacred bosom see

Eternal thoughts of love to me! Again, there are many of God's people who are disquieted concerning their redemption. They want to know whether they were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. According to some theories, nobody need ever be perplexed about this matter. The Arminian says, "Christ died for all men." Some go so far as to say, "He died for all alike." According to them, He died as much for Judas as He did for Peter, and as much for those who were damned in Hell before He laid down His life as for those who were saved in Heaven before He came into the world! Now, I do not hesitate to say that such a redemption as that is a redemption that does not redeem! It is not worth the expense of paper and ink to write about it. It is not worthwhile to open one's mouth to speak of it. A redemption which pays a price, but does not ensure that which is purchased. A redemption which calls Christ a Substitute for the sinner, but yet which allows the person for whom He was substituted to suffer is altogether unworthy of our apprehensions of Almighty God! It offers no homage to His wisdom and does despite to His covenant faithfulness. We could not and we would not receive such a travesty of Divine Truth as that would be! There is no ground for any comfort whatever in it.

We believe that by His atoning Sacrifice, Christ bought some good things for all men and all good things for some men. And that when He died, He had a definite purpose in dying and that His purpose will certainly be effected. Those who are saved owe their security to what His Redemption has accomplished and we fully believe that the accomplishment will be just as great as was the intent and purpose. Not, my Brothers and Sisters, that Christ's blood was less than Infinite in its value—less than Infinite it could never be! The question is not concerning the value of it, but the purpose of it. If God had willed it, there was enough efficacy in the blood of Christ to have redeemed ten thousand worlds. We have, however, not to speak of the efficacy that might have been in it, but of the efficacy that is in it according to the good pleasure which God has purposed in Himself. This doctrine of a special and particular intention in the Atonement of Christ has often troubled Believers in Jesus. But it never ought to. Do you believe in Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? Has His precious blood been applied by the Spirit to your heart and conscience? Has He purged you with hyssop? Then you are clean and that hyssop cannot have been applied to you in a wrong way. Being pardoned, you have the fruit of Redemption, so Redemption is certainly yours! Jesus came into the world to redeem you unto Himself. You are His and you have a clear and proper right to share in the efficacy of His blood and the power of His Atonement. Therefore, I say unto you who, on this account, are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not."

There are many, also, who are troubled about their effectual calling. "Oh," says one, "if I had heard the Master say to me, as He said to Zacchaeus, 'Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house,' then I would know that I was called by Him. Or if He had said to me, 'Mary,' and I had said, 'Rabboni,' I should know that He had

called me. But, oh, Sir, I have come to Christ, yet I sometimes fear that He has never called me. He knows that He is my All-in-All. Other refuge have I none, but I am half-afraid that I have got into this refuge without any right—that I crept up to the foot of the Cross without being called—and that I have taken to myself a confidence which has no sure ground." O child of God, dismiss all those fears! You could not have come to Christ unless He had first come to you! If you have but come behind Him in the crowd and only touched the hem of His garment, you are cured and you shall never again suffer from that disease! That poor woman was not called by Christ's voice, yet I will venture to say that there was a secret call, within her heart, that moved her. Touch the hem of His garment! You may never know exactly how you were first convinced of sin, nor how you were quickened by the Holy Spirit—but if you have really come to Christ, that is enough, for you would never have come to Him unless He had drawn you! He has secretly put the bands of His love about your heart and you have turned to Him as the needle turns to the magnet! The proof that you have been called by Christ is that you have come to Him!

I have frequently noticed that those persons who think that they have had some special and particular call, have been no better, in regard to their evidences and, sometimes they have been much worse than those who have come to Christ in the more ordinary way. I would not say this to the disparagement of any man's conversion, for God works as He wills. But I recollect, and my eyes are just now fixed upon the very place where there once sat a man who presented a Bible to me, (I have it at home now), in which are written these words, "'Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at your house.' Dear Sir, When you pronounced these words last Sabbath morning, I heard a call from God to my soul and I am sure that I came down and that Christ did abide at my house."

That man joined us in Church fellowship. I shall not mention his name, but some of you may remember how sadly he dishonored the name of Christ. He went out from us because he was not of us, for, if he had been of us, doubtless he would have continued with us. It is very easy for us to imagine that we have received some special call of this sort—and then to build our confidence upon it—but if we have not something better than this to rest upon, woe was the day to us! I would far rather, my dear Friends, come to Christ and never know that I had been called except from the fact that I had come, than have some vision or audible words and yet, after all, cease to stand as a simple soul covered with the righteousness of Christ! Well do I know that there is a temptation to look back to the day and to the hour when we had some special manifestation—rather than to look only to the Cross and to the blood—and to calculate that we are converted because we felt this or that extraordinary emotion, instead of still coming, as we always must come, crying to our dear Lord and Savior—

"Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Your Cross I cling"

Another fear, arising from the great and precious Doctrine of Final Perseverance, has troubled many a true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. How shall I hold on and persevere unto the end?" is a question that often causes great anxiety even to a genuine child of God. The best of things, when corrupted, become the most corrupt. The sweetest of comforts, when not believed in, become the bitterest of discomforts. I think that the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the saints is one of those that are most plainly taught in the Scriptures. If I found any difficulty, at any time, in defending against its assailants, the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, I should certainly never find any difficulty in defending the Doctrine of Final Perseverance! Those who oppose it have an irresistible array of passages of Scripture to contend with—they have, indeed, when they attack this Truth of God—to leap into a lion's den! It is strange that so many of the Lord's people should have been troubled concerning this precious Doctrine which is so clearly revealed in the Word of God. "How shall I endure unto the end? How shall I stand fast in the hour of trial? If my temptations are multiplied, if my pains are increased, if my bereavements should follow one upon another, if I should be called to a position of great responsibility, or if I should be cast down into the depths of adversity, how shall I endure it? How shall I be kept steadfast, year after year, and be brought safely home at last? Amid so many rocks and quicksands, storms and hurricanes, how shall my poor water-logged vessel ever enter the port?"

O Believer, if you are really called by Grace, you shall certainly persevere! He who set your feet a-running in His ways will never let you stop till you have come to your journey's end! Christ's promise to all His people is, "Because I live, you shall live also." Your perseverance does not rest with you, otherwise you were indeed an undone wretch! But it rests with your Lord and Savior—and He will preserve you even unto the end! As your days, so shall your strength be." With the temptation, He will make a way of escape that you shall be able to bear it. So again I say to you who are troubled about your ultimate salvation, "Be strong, fear not." He who has begun the good work in you will carry it on and finish it in righteousness! He will not leave you, for His promise to everyone who believes in Him is, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

II. I have thus dealt with some fears from without. Now I am going, for a only few minutes, to speak upon SOME OF THE FEARS WHICH COME FROM WITHIN.

Multitudes of Believers are of a fearful heart because they have not the joys and comforts with which some Christians are favored. God has some of His people who live very near to Himself and who, therefore, partake of the richest things upon His banqueting table. These privileged saints tell of their joys, but certain desponding Christians who have backslidden from God and who, therefore, have not of late tasted of these dainties, cry out, "We cannot be the Lord's people, for we have no such joys as these." As well might the plant in the corner say that it was not planted at all because it did not stand in the front row of the bed! As well might some small tree in the forest say that it did not live because it did not tower aloft, like

some mighty cedar of Lebanon! Because I am not the fairest rose, but only a humble violet hidden among the green leaves, am I to conclude that I am not a flower at all? Oh, no, no! We are not saved by our comforts! They are given to us after we are saved, but we are saved without them. Many a soul has gone to Hell singing, while others have gone to Heaven sighing. It is not right that God's people should hang their harps upon the willows, but far better is it for us to hang our harps upon the willows than, like Haman, to be hanged upon the gallows that, in his pride and malice, he had erected for his enemy, Mordecai! Because we have not all the comforts which some Christians have, let us not be fretful and repine—that is the way to prevent ourselves from ever having them. I would say of the comforts of religion as Christ said of the comforts of this world, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek Christ first! Have simple faith in Him and then the ecstasies, the raptures, the enjoyments, the uplifting which some of His people have, shall be added unto you if the Lord sees that it is well for you to have them! But if you seek those things first, you shall neither have them nor any other sort of comfort whatever.

Full many there are, also, who are greatly cast down because of the conflict within. As soon as there are wars and fights between the two men—the old man and the new man—they at once conclude that it is all over with them. Foolish conclusion, indeed, since, if there were no wars it would be a proof that there was no life! If there were no conflicts it would be an evidence that there was but one power within—and that power the evil one! Draw not, from your internal commotions, from the temptation which assails you and the force with which it acts against your inward principles—draw not the inference that, therefore, you are a castaway of God! This is rather a reason why you should cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And, by faith should shout, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Very many have come across my path, too, who are of a fearful heart because they have such little faith and they fear that their little faith will not be sufficient. Ah, Believer, your true riches do not depend upon the amount of your spending money! The Lord sometimes keeps His children rather short of pocket money, but, still, the whole of His riches belongs to them all the while. The unsearchable riches of Christ are the measure of our true wealth—not that portion which we can manage to lay hold of by the hand of faith. If I have, in my hand, but one farthing of faith's wealth, that is a proof that all the riches of Christ belong to me. If I have but faith as a grain of mustard seed—so small that it looks as though the first bird of the air that came my way might carry it away, yet, inasmuch as there is life hidden within that tiny mustard seed—a life which only needs the Grace of God to expand and develop it—I am saved, though my faith is but small!

A few, too, I have known, who are troubled with doubts and fears because they do not understand as much as they would like to. They cannot read books of divinity, or, if they

do read them, they get lost amid the maze of difficult theological terms. They cannot reconcile certain Truths of God, the one with the other. But this is no ground for fear, for the Gospel is so simple that it is adapted even for those who are all but idiots! I have read some extraordinary instances—facts that no one can dispute—of persons scarcely a degree above sheer idiocy who have, nevertheless, believed in Christ,

yes, and whose sayings have had about them certain flashes of a superlative simplicity and supernatural wisdom—and whose words, when they were sifted and carefully examined, were found to read rather like the mind of the Spirit than like the utterances of a poor creature whose mind was almost gone! Think not, dear Friend, that your ignorance can push you out of the family of God! Little children cannot read Greek and Latin, but they can say, Abba, Father," and that is all they need to say. If you cannot read books of deep theological lore, yet, if Jesus Christ is yours—if you are trusting in Him—even the imperfect knowledge that you have of Him proves that you are His! And He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

I have met with some, too, who were of a fearful heart, afraid that they would be lost because they felt that they had, at some period of their lives, neglected Christian duty. This is an old temptation that Satan often casts in the way of godly people. You remember how John Bunyan represents Apollyon as charging poor Christian with being unfaithful—"You did faint at first setting out, when you were almost choked in the Gulf of Despond. You did attempt wrong ways, to be rid of your burden, whereas you should have stayed till your Prince had taken it off! You did sinfully sleep and lose your choice thing; you were also almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions. And when you talk of your journey and of what you have heard and seen, you are inwardly desirous of vain-glory in all that you say or do." Now, if any of you should be troubled by similar accusations of the adversary, recollect that since Christ did not love you for your good works, they are not the cause of His beginning to love you—and so He does not love you for your good works even now—and they are not the cause of His continuing to love you! He loves you because He will love you. What He approves in you now is that which He has, Himself, given to you! That is always the same—it always abides as it was. The life of God is always within you. Jesus has not turned away His heart from you, nor has the flame of His love decreased in the smallest degree. Therefore, faint Heart, fear not, be strong."

III. I might go on to deal with other fears of God's people, but, instead of doing so, I want TO EXCITE YOU TO GET BEYOND THESE FEARS. In the words of my text, to exhort you to "fear not," but to "be strong."

Some few Sabbaths ago I told you that I had met with a Christian Brother who had never had a doubt. Lately, in Glasgow, I met with another. Mr. Alexander Macleod, the oldest Baptist minister, I believe, in Scotland, told me that he was converted to God, upon the Calton Hill, under Rowland Hill's ministry. He is now, I suppose, 82 or 83 years of age

and is still a strong man. He has known the Lord for more than 60 years and he says that not once in his life did he ever have a doubt concerning his election, his calling, his interest in Christ, or his final perseverance. He said that he once heard a Unitarian minister preach against the Divinity of Christ and his mind was greatly disturbed, but he never went the length of having any doubts either about Christ, or about his own interest in Him. I knew the man to be everywhere revered for his piety and for the holiness and consistency of his life. I could not, therefore, doubt the truth of what he told me. But I was surprised, not at him, but at myself, that I, who have the same God as he has and perhaps have had more mercies than he has received—that I, in the full vigor of early manhood should doubt, while he, in his old age, should be able to truthfully declare that his soul had never wavered in his simple confidence in Jesus. When I expressed my surprise at him, he expressed a great deal more surprise at me! He said that he came to Christ as a poor sinner and trusted Him to be his All-in-All, and he did not mean to alter his belief until he saw good reason for doing so. I hope that you and I, dear Friends, will come to Jesus, yet again, as poor sinners and take Him to be our All-in-All—and never change from that simple faith till we see good reason for doing so—which, I take it, will never be so long as the heart of Christ is full of affections, the arm of Jesus is unpalsied through affliction, and the eyes of Christ are undimmed with age!

I am sure that Satan is very much gratified when he sees that any of us are of a fearful heart. No doubt he chuckles over it and makes as much as he can of his sorry triumph over poor weak mortals. Do not yield to him, Beloved! Draw your swords and strike boldly at him! Believe that you will overcome him, and you will do so. March forward and believe that the land of promise is yours, for it is yours and you shall surely go up and possess it! Is it necessary that the children of God should be a doubting people? Is it necessary that they should be continually cast down? By no means! For it is a great and grievous sin for us to distrust our God. Let us trust in Him at all times and even say with Job, Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

The path of faith is the smoothest path, after all. The road of life will always be rough, but he who walks by faith will find half its roughness removed. The greater part of our sorrows come not from Heaven, nor Hell, nor earth, but from ourselves. We are our own plague-makers and our own tormentors! A man with strong faith is like one who wears a

leather glove who can lay hold of thorns and thistles and not be hurt. But the man with weak faith is like one not only with a naked hand, but with the skin off it—everything he touches irritates the tender flesh and even the small grains of dust may fret within the wound and breed ulcers and foul sores. Be strong." God is with you, so how dare you be dismayed because of your own weakness? "Fear not." The Lord is your confidence—it is presumption for you to mistrust Him. "Be strong." The might of God is engaged by promise and by oath to bring you safely through. "Fear not." There is no cause for fear—the enemies whom you

have seen today, you shall see again no more forever. "Fear not." Fear weakens you and moreover, it dishonors God and gives cause to the enemy to blaspheme His holy name.

I do not know whether this is a portion of meat to any troubled heart here present. Possibly it may be. If so, poor Soul, feed on it. You have gone to a new situation, have you not, and there are some ungodly young men who revile and ridicule you? Well, then, fear not, be strong." Your business does not answer so well as it did and you hardly know what will become of you. "Fear not, be strong." Commit your cause unto the Lord, lay your case at His feet. Possibly you have sickness in the house and you are half inclined to repine, and to think that there is some anger mingled with the strokes of the rod. "Fear not, be strong." Either the blow you dread will never be inflicted or it will be a blessed blow! This is but a slight sorrow. Do you think me hard and unfeeling in so describing it? But it may be that this sorrow will be very slight compared with that from which you are spared—if this blow did not fall, it might involve a ten times heavier one!

Perhaps you have been sorely tempted by Satan lately and he says that he shall at last have you. Be strong, fear not." Strike him all the harder for telling that lie! Strike at him with all your power, for, in the might of God, you are far mightier than he is and you can prevail over him! And you, young Man, have recently undertaken service for your Savior, but you feel that you have not the strength needed for it and you are inclined to give up. Fear not, be strong." He who calls you to His service will support you in it! You and I have to stand like Gideon's soldiers, with the lamp inside the pitcher—that pitcher needs to be broken before the light of the lamp can be seen. The strength of man is like that earthen pitcher and the light of God cannot shine forth until that pitcher is dashed in pieces!

There is one person I must not forget, perhaps more. There are those who know that they are drawing near unto the grave. The shadows lengthen out and their life becomes like the spider's web and they are afraid to die. They know the living Savior, but they fear the dying hour. They think Death's stream is dark, cold and deep—how shall they pass through it to reach the Celestial City? Fear not, be strong." Death is the last enemy and he is to be destroyed. Remember that, and be of good cheer! He shall not destroy you. Do not call him Death the Destroyer, but Death the Destroyed! Be certain of victory in your last moments! No, look forward, even now, with hopeful joy to that most blessed of all moments when, laying your head upon the death pillow, you shall find that Christ's bosom is where that pillow lies and you shall breathe your life out there, finding no iron gates, no shadow of dark wings, no horror of darkness, no dying strife—but bliss beginning, bliss increasing, bliss overflowing and running on forever and ever—bliss that shall be yours beyond the hazard of loss!

God grant unto each one of us that we may be strong, and fear not, for Christ's sake Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 45'

While we are reading this chapter, and thinking of Cyrus, the Lord's anointed deliverer for Israel, let us not forget the greater Deliverer of whom the hymn writer sings—

"Thus says God of His Anointed, He shall let My people go! 'Tis the work for Him appointed, 'Tis the work that He shall do. And My city

He shall found, and build it, too." Verse 1. Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut. It was

thought impossible for any foreign troops to enter Babylon, yet the gates were found open and the army of Cyrus marched in and took possession of the city!

2, 3. I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight. I will break in piece the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give you the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, which call you by your name, am the God of Israel. Whenever God calls a man to do any work, however difficult and even impossible it may seem to be, he will certainly accomplish it because he will have God with him. The Lord will gird his loins and make him strong—and all the forces of Providence shall work towards the accomplishment of the Divine end. Has God given you any work to do? It may be a much easier task than that of Cyrus, so, as the Lord enabled him to succeed in his great enterprise, you may have confidence that His power is sufficient to give success to you, also! It may seem to be presumption for you to undertake such a work, yet, if you are called of God to do it, go on without a shadow of doubt, for He will make the crooked places straight and break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. We must not forget that whatever God did in relation to Cyrus was done with an eye to the welfare of His own people.

4. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me. And all the powers and princes that arise in this world, God can use for the good of His Church! All the nations, kingdoms and powers there are, are only like so much scaffolding for the building of God's own house—and He makes use of them as He pleases, though, often, they know not what He is doing with them!

5, 6. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God besides Me: I girded you, though you have not known Me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. This was intended to correct the mistake of Cyrus who probably was a fire-worshipper—a believer in the two great forces of good and evil which were supposed to be equally eternal and powerful—which the Persians regarded as the god of good and the god of evil. So the Lord says—

7. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. There are not two distinct principles that are omnipotent and, though God

is not the Author of moral evil, yet whatever there is of evil which causes us pain and loss is under His control. There are not two gods, but only one living and true God.

8-10. Drop down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together, I the LORD have created it Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are you making? Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'? Woe unto him that says unto his father, What are you begetting? Or to the woman, What have you brought forth? God, on the ground of His being Creator, demands that He shall not be questioned by human wisdom, nor dictated to by human pride. He is the one Supreme Sovereign and Lord of All—and He may do absolutely as He pleases. It is a joy and delight to us that He always wills to do what is just and right. Still, His Divine prerogative must not be abridged in any way whatever. The potsherds that he has made must never question the action of the great Potter who has made them! Has He not power to mold and fashion the clay exactly as He pleases?

11, 12. Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. When we think of this, we ought to worship God, alone, and trust Him, alone, and pay all loyal homage to Him. What can there be that is comparable to the Creator of all things? There is not so much as a grain of dust, nor a single fly that is self-created, or man-made—but everything has come from God and exists because He wills it. Therefore, give to the Lord the Glory that is due unto His name and rest in His power, and trust in His might.

13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward, says the LORD of Hosts. And so Cyrus did. It was through him that Jerusalem was rebuilt and the captive Israelites were delivered!

14, 15. Thus says the LORD, The labor of Egypt, and merchants of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto you, and they shall be yours: they shall come after you; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto you, they shall make supplication unto you, saying, Surely God is in you, and there is none else, there is

no other God. Verily You are a God that hides Yourself O God of Israel, the Savior This is a most merciful arrangement, for, if God did not hide Himself, none of us could exist! The full blaze of His Divine Countenance would be our destruction. God said even to Moses, "You cannot see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live." But it is also partly in judgment that God sometimes hides even that measure of His Presence which, at other times, He reveals in love. But even then, though He is hidden, He is still there. As the blue sky is up yonder, though it is long since you saw it, so is God always present even though

we cannot see Him. The mountains, when hidden in darkness, are as real as they are in the light of day—and God is as truly near to His people, to preserve and succor them when they do not see Him, as when they do.

16-19. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: you shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus says the LORD that created the heavens, God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established, it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a darkplace of the earth: I said unto the seed of Jacob, See you Me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. It is a very consolatory thing for us to be told not only what God has said, but also what He has not said. You can be sure of this, that there is nothing in the secret book of God's decrees, and nothing in the sealed book of prophecy which is contrary to the gracious covenant promises which God has revealed to His people in His Word. He does not say one thing and mean another. You may rest assured that all the revelations that are yet to be given, if there are to be any, (and there are some who are always talking about fresh light breaking from the Word), will never contradict that which has been revealed of old! God did not tell His ancient people anything which contradicts what He has told us. The poorest and meanest of His people who have been able to spell out, in the Word of God, their right and title to the Divine inheritance, may rely upon it that if any wise man comes to them with some wonderful discovery which contradicts the Bible—he simply comes with a lie—for God has nowhere contradicted what He has plainly revealed in the Scriptures!

20, 21. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you that are escaped of the nations. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; yes, let them take counsel together. What wooden god has ever foretold the future? What idol of brass or stone had a word to say about the coming of Cyrus? Not one.

21-25. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to Him shall men come, and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.