

The Spirit's Work in the New Creation

(No. 3134)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 23, 1873.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." [Genesis 1:2](#).

[See Sermons #660, Volume 11—LIGHT, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL and #1252, Volume 21—THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION.]

WE cannot tell how the Spirit of God brooded over that vast watery mass. It is a mystery, but it is also a fact. And it is here revealed as having happened at the very commencement of the Creation, even before God had said, "Let there be light." The first Divine act in fitting up this planet for the habitation of man was for the Spirit of God to move upon the face of the waters. Till that time all was formless, empty, out of order and in confusion. In a word, it was chaos. And to make it into that thing of beauty which the world is at the present moment, even though it is a fallen world, it was necessary that the movement of the Spirit of God should take place upon it. How the Spirit works upon matter, we do not know, but we do know that God, who is a Spirit, created matter, fashioned matter and sustained matter—and that He will yet deliver matter from the stain of sin which is upon it. We shall see new heavens and a new earth in which materialism itself shall be lifted up from its present state of ruin and shall glorify God! But without the Spirit of God, the materialism of this world would have remained forever in chaos. Only as the Spirit came, did the work of Creation begin.

That fact I intend to use this evening, spiritualizing it. It is a literal fact and we are not to regard this Chapter of Genesis or any other part of Genesis as being a mere parable. But having said so, we think we may now say that these real facts may illustrate the work of God in the new creation and our main thought, just now, is that the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man is comparable to His work in Creation. As in various books by the same author you can trace the writer's idioms and as in many paintings by one great artist there are certain touches which betray the same hand, so in the great book of Nature we see traces of the same hand as in the book of Grace! And in this great picture of material beauty we may see the handiwork of that same Master Artist who has drawn lines and curves of spiritual beauty upon the souls of the redeemed!

I. I am going, first, to try to draw A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE OLD AND NEW CREATION.

And first I want to remind you that as the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the waters was the first act in the six days work, so the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is the first work of Grace in that soul. There may have been a thousand sermons heard, but there has been no effectual work within the soul until the Spirit of God comes there! Sabbaths may have passed over the man's head for 50 years and during every one of those Sabbaths that man may have been a regular attendant at the House of God—but there has been nothing savingly done for him unless the Spirit of God has entered into him and begun to work upon his soul. He may have been baptized and joined the Church and partaken of the Lord's Supper—but, for all that, his heart is still without any sort of form or fashion which God would have it to bear. It is void—there is no life of God within it, no faith in Christ, no true hope for the future. It is emptiness, itself, notwithstanding all that has been done, if the Spirit of God has not been at work in it!

It is a very humbling Truth of God, but a Truth, notwithstanding its humiliating form, that the best man that mere morality ever produced is still "without form and void" if the Spirit of God has not come upon him. All the efforts of men which they make by nature, when stirred up by the example of others or by godly precepts, produce nothing but

chaos in another shape! Some of the mountains may have been leveled, but valleys have been elevated into other mountains. Some vices have been discarded, but only to be replaced by other vices that are, perhaps, even worse. Or certain transgressions have been forsaken for a while, only to be followed by a return to the same sins, so that it has happened unto them, as Peter writes, "according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Unless the Spirit of God has been at work within him, the man is still, in the sight of God, "without form and void" as to everything which God can look upon with pleasure. What? Is it so when a man has made great efforts and has really done his best? Yes, for, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Even when the flesh does its best, its fairest offspring is still only flesh! Water will naturally rise as high as its own source, but without extraneous pressure, it will never rise any higher. And humanity may rise as high as humanity can rise, but it can never get any higher until the Spirit of God imparts a supernatural force to it. "Except a man be born-again (born from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The very first act in the great work of the new creation is that the Spirit of God moves upon the soul as He moved upon the face of the waters.

The second thing I ask you to note is that to this work nothing whatever is contributed by the man himself "The earth was without form and void," so it could not do anything to help the Spirit. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." The Spirit found no light there—it had to be created. There was nothing whatever there to help the Spirit of God—no agencies at work to say to Him, "We have been preparing the way for Your coming. We needed Your assistance. We were waiting for You and we rejoice that You have come to finish the work

that we have begun." There was nothing of the kind! And sad as the Truth is, in unregenerate man there is nothing whatever that can help the Spirit of God. The heart of man promises help, but, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The will has great influence over the man, but the will is depraved, so it tries to play the tyrant over all the other powers of the man—and it refuses to become the servant of the eternal Spirit of Truth! If I am never to preach the Gospel to a sinner till I see something in him that will help the Holy Spirit to save him, I shall never be able to preach the Gospel at all! And if Jesus Christ never saves a man till He sees something in that man that cries to Christ to save Him, then no man will ever be saved! We are, by nature, not merely like the man who was wounded on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and who was left on the road half dead, but we are wholly "dead in trespasses and sins." And in the dead sinner there is nothing that can help his own resurrection! There is not a hand there to be lifted, nor even an ear to hear, nor an eye to see, nor a pulse that can beat. We do not exaggerate nor go beyond the Truth of God when we say this. And every man is thus dead till the Spirit of God comes to him! And when the Spirit comes to him, He finds nothing in the man that can co-operate with Him, and everything that is to be good must be created in him, brought to him and be infused into him. What is needed is not the flaming of sparks that have almost expired—not the strengthening of a life that was almost dead through faintness—the Spirit has to deal with death, rottenness and corruption! Man's nature is a morgue and a sepulcher—and a little Hell—and God's Spirit must bring to it that which is living, good and pleasing in God's sight if it is ever to be there!

But more than that, in the old creation, not only was there nothing whatever that could help the Holy Spirit, but there seemed nothing at all suitable to the Spirit. I mean, for instance, that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Order, but there was disorder. He is the Spirit of Light, but there was darkness. Does it not seem a strange thing that the Spirit of God should have come there at all? Adored in His excellent Glory in the Heaven where all is order and all is light, why should He come to brood over that watery deep and to bring the great work of bringing order out of chaos? And, in a similar fashion, often and often have we asked—Why should the Spirit of God ever have come into our hearts? What was there in us to induce the Spirit of God to begin a work of Grace in us? We admire the condescension of Jesus in leaving Heaven to dwell upon earth, but do we not equally admire the condescension of the Holy Spirit in coming to dwell in such poor hearts as ours? Jesus dwelt with sinners, but the Holy Spirit dwells in us. If it were possible for the condescension of the Incarnation to be outdone, it would be in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men! This is a miracle of mercy, indeed, for I say again, there is nothing in the heart by nature that can at all please the Holy Spirit, but there is everything there that can grieve Him! The Spirit would beget in us repentance for sin, but the heart is hard as a rock. The Spirit would work in us faith, but the heart is full of unbelief. The Spirit would make us pure, but the heart is fond

of sin. The Spirit would lead us towards God, but all our passions incline us to run away from Him and to

run to everything that is contrary to Him. Yet does the Spirit of God come and work in us while our heart is nothing but chaos and our nature is full of darkness! For this wonderful mercy, let us bless and love the Spirit of God!

Notice, also, that the Spirit of God is as mysterious in His coming into human hearts as He was in His working in the old Creation. I said before that we cannot explain how the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. Some try to fetch a meaning out of the Hebrew word, but I believe it helps them very little. It is one of the deep mysteries of Scripture. Ever must the contact of the Spirit with materialism remain a marvel—and can we ever tell how the Spirit of God comes and deals with sinful men? We know that our Savior, Himself, said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it came and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the

Spirit."

But mysterious as it is, it is real—as those who have experienced it know—and as those may see who will watch the effects which the Spirit produces upon the hearts of men. I would like to ask all in this present assembly whether they know anything about the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Beloved Hearers, there may be many things of which you may be ignorant and yet you may be none the worse for that ignorance. But if you are ignorant of the working of the Holy Spirit in your spirit, then you are ignorant of eternal life—ignorant of the one thing necessary to deliver you from Hell and lift you up to Heaven! Have you ever experienced within your spirit a Divine Power that turned you from your old habits and old ways—and that made such a radical change in you that you are no longer what you once were—a change that was practically to you a new birth, a new creation? I pray you not to deceive yourselves about this matter! Sinners had to be born-again in the Apostles' time and they must be born-again now if they are ever to see or to enter the Kingdom of God! It was necessary that they should be regenerated in the days of Christ, but it is equally necessary now. And it is not merely necessary for people who have been to prison or who have been thieves and drunks—it is equally necessary for you, the children of godly parents, for you respectable people, for you who have never done a dishonorable action in all your lives! You are not yet partakers of the Divine Nature unless the Spirit of God, in the deep mystery of His almighty power, has worked that new life in your soul! Solemnly have I asked myself this question, "Have I been born-again?" And I urge each one of you earnestly to examine yourselves upon this all-important matter. Do you know that this new life has been put within you? Let none of us be satisfied unless we know that it is so! What an awful thing it would be to be in doubt whether I am a child of God or not—whether I am on the road to Heaven or not! May God grant that none of us may be

in such doubt, even for an hour—but may we have absolute certainty upon this point, mysterious though it is!

We have so far noted that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters as the first act of the six-days' work and that by this movement nothing on the earth contributed or was congruous, that this movement was a mystery and yet very real. Note, next, that this movement was most effectual. "The earth was without form, and void," but that did not defeat the purpose of the Spirit of God. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," but He could work in the dark. The darkness did not hinder Him and, blessed be God, the deep depravity of our nature does not prevent the Holy Spirit from creating it anew in Christ Jesus! Without God, the turning of a heart of stone into flesh would surely be impossible! And if there had ever been an impossibility of impossibilities, I feel that the changing of my nature would have been that impossibility—and each Christian here may feel the same with regard to himself or herself. But nothing is too hard for the Lord! Though a man may have had no knowledge of the Gospel up to the time when the Spirit of God came upon him, or though he may have been as violently opposed to that Gospel as he possibly could be, yet let the Spirit of God savingly deal with that man and all hindrances disappear, all opposition gives way and the work of Grace is effectually accomplished! Light came when God said, "Let there be light." The waters were separated, the dry land appeared and the winged fowl, the fish that swim in the deep, the cattle that crowd the fields and man, himself, in the image of God— all these came at the Lord's command! Chaos had become a garden and death blossomed into life!

It only needed the Spirit of God to come and then the work was effectually done. And this is a point I want to mention as good cheer to some who are here. You may be dead in sin, but the Spirit of God can quicken you! Dear Brother, you may be preaching to those who are dead in sin, but preach the Gospel to them all the same! It is your business to preach the Gospel to dead sinners, for it is the Gospel that makes the dead to live! If we had to look for some natural goodness in the sinner before we preached the Gospel to him, we would never preach to him at all! But we have to go to him where he is, with darkness over his soul and ruin and confusion all around—and while we preach the Word, the Spirit of God accompanies it with saving power and the man is made to live—and he is fashioned in the image of God! Blessed be God, the Spirit's work is always effectual! It is possible to grieve and to resist the Holy Spirit, but when He puts forth His almighty power, then He is irresistible! The will is sweetly inclined and the man cries, "Great God, I yield, constrained by mighty love. I throw down my weapons of rebellion and I willingly go as Your gracious Spirit leads

me."

I want you to also notice that where the Spirit came, the work was carried on to completion. The work of Creation did not end with the first day, but went on till it was finished on

the sixth day. God did not say, "I have made the light and now I will leave the earth as it is." And when He had begun to divide the waters and to separate the land from the sea, He did not say, "Now I will have no more to do with the work." He did not take the newly-fashioned earth in His hands and fling it back into chaos, but He went on with His work until, on the seventh day, when it was completed, He rested from all His work and, glory be to God, He will not leave unfinished the work which He has commenced in our souls! Where the Spirit of God has begun to move, He continues to move until the work is done. And He will not fail or turn aside until all is accomplished. How we ought to bless His name for this! If the Spirit of God ever did utterly leave His work in any man's soul undone, then each one here might feel, "He may leave it unfinished in me"—and there would remain no solid comfort for any one of us! If a child of God could ever fall from Grace, then you and I might be among the first to fall, but Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternall life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Rightly do we sing—

"The work which wisdom undertakes Eternal mercy never forsakes/" As surely as there is a first day, there will come a seventh day in which God will rest because His work will be completed. And as surely as the Spirit of God has moved upon our soul and there has come to us light instead of darkness, so shall there be a day of rest in which we shall keep the Sabbath of God with Him forever, because the Spirit's work has been completed in us even as the work of Christ has been finished on our behalf.

II. Now, having thus tried to draw a parallel between the Spirit's work in the old and the new Creation, let me go on to the practical part of this evening's meditation and try to show you, in the second place, that THE PARALLEL WE HAVE DRAWN FURNISHES MANY ENCOURAGEMENTS.

And first, it furnishes encouragement to those distressed sinners who fear that they are utterly beyond the possibility of salvation. "I," says one, "am conscious that there is no good in me of any sort whatever. And I am so wicked that grim despair has settled down upon my heart." Listen to the text, my Brother—"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Is not that an exact description of your heart? "Oh, yes," you say, "that is a terribly true picture of myself!" Well, what comes next? "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." While there was confusion, while there was darkness—before there was any sort of preparation for the coming of the Spirit, any kindling of flambeaux with which to break the darkness, or anything that would have seemed like the beginning of order, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters! Then why should He not move in your soul? Others who were in just as sad a condition as you are now in, have been saved—then why should you not also be saved? You have been a gross sinner, but other equally gross sinners have received the Spirit of God, who has brought Christ to them—so why should not you? If you have been the vilest of the vile, there is one

text that still gives you good cheer. It is that one where Paul speaks of himself as the chief of sinners and yet declares that he was saved. You cannot be a greater sinner than the chief of sinners! The chief is first of all and you can only be second to the chief. Or if you are even equal to him, God has proved His power to save you by saving Saul of Tarsus! Think of what Saul's case was like when he was on the road to Damascus. Why, if it were possible, it was more chaotic than chaos, itself, and darker than the primeval darkness! He was exceedingly angry against the people of God and was bent upon their destruction! Yet the Spirit of God came upon him and within a few minutes he was crying out, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

Let me further say to you, poor despairing Soul, suppose such an one as you are should be saved—would it not be a wonder of Grace? "Yes," you say, "it would, indeed." Well, God is the great Wonder-Worker! It is His delight to do things which are very wonderful, for these bring Him the most glory. Men can do commonplace things, but wonders are worked by God! If He were to save you, would you not forever feel indebted to His Grace? "Yes," you say, "that I should, if He would take such a black and sinful one as I am and save me." Very well. This is just what He wants in His

children, that they should forever love Him and praise Him—and feel that they are under gracious obligations of love to Him. When God means to make a great saint, He often uses a great sinner as the raw material. It is the man who is greatly in debt who loves the friend who discharges his debt. If I were a physician and I wanted to establish my fame, do you think that I should trouble about you who have a finger ache or some other trifling complaint? No! If I wanted London to ring with the story of my cures, I would try to find out the man who is nearest to the gates of death, or one who is afflicted with many diseases at once, for if I healed him, all would be amazed and it would be reported everywhere, "This man has worked this great marvel." Now, Christ is the Physician and you are the patient. And the worse you are, the more glory can He get out of you! He is certainly able to save you, bad as you are, and so He will glorify His name as a Savior. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Thus I say unto you, O Soul, though you are empty of everything but sin, the Spirit of God can fill you with Grace! And though darkness enshrouds you, the Spirit of God can come upon you and make you light in the Lord! So you need not despair, but rather give your ear attentively to this promise of the Lord Jesus Christ—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Or this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." May the Spirit of God lead you to believe in Jesus!

There is an equal encouragement in this text for those who are the people of God, or who once thought that they were, but who have fallen into a very sad and miserable condition. There are some who have walked in the Light of God and enjoyed sweet fellowship with Him, but they have been very careless, or they have neglected private prayer, or perhaps

they have fallen into sin and now they have got into such a state of heart that they cannot see anything gracious in themselves. "Oh," says such an one, "I am worse than the sinner who never knew Christ! I feel as if I had played the apostate, like Judas, or as if I had turned aside, like Demas, loving the present world, or as if I were a tree without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. I feel that in myself there is no order of Grace and no light of love." Listen, dear Friend, to my text—"And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." I bless God that I have many a time known what it is, when I felt most barren, to be made to blossom and bring forth fruit—and when apparently most dead, suddenly to be quickened into ecstatic life! And when I have, in my own estimation, lain at Hell's door, yet by one promise applied with power, by one flash of the Divine energy, to be lifted up and made to say, even in that place wherein my soul slept, like Jacob did at Bethel, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

Has not the Spirit of God often dealt so with you experienced saints who know what the ups and downs of the Christian life are? Has He not made you strong when you have been weak and made you to sing just after you had been sighing—and made the waters to be calmest just after the fiercest storm and your brightest days to follow just after the hurricane? Then have you rejoiced in the clear shining after rain, when the winter was over and gone and when the voice of the singing of birds was heard in your land! I know you have found it so! Then do you now think that the Lord waits to find some good thing in you before He will bless you? Did He not love you when you were in your blood, like an infant cast out into the field unwashed and unswaddled? Do you think that His arm is shortened, or that His love is diminished? You say that you have been unfaithful to Him, but He abides faithful! Your faith may seem to be dead, but "your life is hid with Christ in God." You feel so foul, but—

"There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

Do not despair, dear Friend—look again to the Cross—begin again where you began before! Remember the simple

story that I told you long ago of poor Jack the Huckster, [See Sermon #47, Volume 1—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.] who used to sing—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All."

Get back to that point, dear Brother or Sister, and so you will get back to Light of God and once more you will realize that the Spirit of God is working within your spirit!

I think our text also gives encouragement to those who are working for God. You are not now thinking about yourself. You have, by Divine Grace, advanced beyond that stage,

and you are thinking about others. You are going to take a district and visit it—and there are places there that swarm with the worst of characters. You do not know any good people there who are at all likely to welcome and assist you. Go there, my dear Brother! Venture there, my dear Sister, without any fear, remembering that although "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the waters." Go to that dark spot, for the Spirit of God will go with you! He will guide you through the darkness and through the chaos—and will help and bless you. Missionaries have gone to lands where the people were cannibals, but they have not been unsuccessful. The Gospel has been carried to people who were so degraded that they did not seem to have any sense of possessing even a soul—yet the Gospel had not been without fruit among them! No race of men has ever been discovered that has been sunk too low for the Spirit of God to work upon them and to save them! Let us never despair of any, or think that they are beyond the Spirit's power.

"But," says one, "I would like to speak to those who are willing to hear me and who are anxious to be saved." No doubt you would, for most people like easy work, but if the Lord sends you to those who do not wish to be saved, and who have no care at all about religion, you must not pick and choose your work—you must go where God sends you! Would you not like to go where God would get the most glory? Of course you would! Well, He gets the most glory when big sinners are saved, when those who hated Him most begin to love Him, when those who were most opposed to His Truth gladly receive it! Then there is the greatest triumph of His Grace and the greatest glory to His holy name. I have sometimes thought that I would like to have lived in England in the days of the Puritans. It must have been a great privilege to have heard some of those old masters of theology preaching the Gospel and to have mingled with the holy multitudes that worshipped God in those days when this land was a very Paradise. But there is more need of the preacher of the Gospel now than ever there was and, therefore, he ought to be glad to be where he is most needed. A good servant would rather that his master put him where there is plenty for him to do than let him be where there are more workers than work! I see the thick clouds of Popery spreading over the land in every direction and see scarcely anything in the signs of the times that tends to cheer one's heart. I see plenty of comfort in the Scriptures! I have abundant joy in the Lord and rest in Him, but as for the way in which things are going in all the churches—ah, Lord God, how has Your Spirit been restrained and how little work does He appear to be doing in these evil times! But because the times are dark, shall we despair? No, but still remember that when "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep"—then "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Was it not so in Christ's own day and in the time of the Apostles? The world was sunk in sin, superstition and cruelty—but after Pentecost thousands were converted! Was it not so in Luther's day? The professing church, like another Samson, was lulled to sleep upon

the lap of the Delilah of Rome! And the church's locks were utterly shorn—its strength was gone and it was delivered over to the Philistines. But, in due time, the Spirit of God came into the darkness and the great Truth that we are justified by faith—not by the works of the Law—was like a repetition of the ancient command and its sequel, "Let there be light, and there was light." Blessed be God, the darkness of those days could not keep back the light of Luther's preaching! Nor Calvin's clear transparent preaching and Zwingli's burning words! And if all England should become black as night and things grow worse, and worse, and worse, and worse, until they come to the worst—and Satan lords it over all—there would be no cause for fear even then! Fearlessly should the soldiers of Christ still go on, for the Spirit of God will again move when chaos and darkness reign! Be of good cheer, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Pray on, work on, trust on and God will indeed bless you!

I earnestly pray that those to whom I have spoken may receive whatever of the Truth of God I have uttered. And especially do I pray this for the seeking sinner. How I long that he may realize that the only power that can save him lies outside himself! If you are ever to be accepted before God, you will never be accepted through anything that you are in yourself. You will have to be accepted in Christ Jesus and, in order to be accepted in Christ Jesus, you must have faith in Jesus. If you are ever to be a living child of the living God, the Spirit of God must quicken you! There is in you nothing whatever that can recommend you to God. He and He, alone, must save you if you are ever to be saved. "Why," says one, "you drive me to despair by talking like that!" I wish I could drive you to such despair as would make you cease from your own works and leave off all ideas of self-salvation—and make you fall as one dead before the Throne of Mercy and cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" We cannot too plainly preach that salvation is of the Lord alone! Everything that is of

Nature's spinning will have to be unraveled and the soul must be clothed in the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ. You may build on the sandy foundation of creature merit, but all you build will surely come down! Oh, that you may cease from such foolish building and that you may build upon what Jesus Christ has done! There you will build upon the Rock, the real foundation! If the Spirit of God will enable you to build there, you will have built for eternity! May Grace, mercy, and peace be with you in so doing, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 50.

Verses 1-4. The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. To profess to be the people of God is a very solemn thing, for the Apostle Peter tells us that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Those who profess to be His people shall be like the wheat on the threshing floor. John the

Baptist, preparing the way for the first coming of Christ, said of Him, "whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." When He comes again, He will separate the precious from the vile, the true saint from the mere pretender!

5, 6. Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge, Himself Selah. He will not depute this office to another. He knows the details of each case, He knows the motives that have been at the back of every action, He knows the Law and He knows what sentence ought to be passed in every instance. "God is Judge, Himself."

7-9. Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God. I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds. Observe what contempt God expresses in this Psalm for all mere ceremonial sacrifices. They were ordained by God and were acceptable to Him when offered with a right motive. But apart from that motive and apart from their spiritual significance, what was there in them to make them acceptable to the Most High? Does the Lord delight in the fat of bulls or the blood of goats? There can be nothing in these things, in themselves, that can please His infinite mind, so He says of them. "I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds." Where the heart was not given with the offering, it could not be well-pleasing unto the Lord.

10, 11. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If any man thinks that he can make God his debtor by any offering that he brings to Him, what a great mistake he makes! Whatever you bring to God, you will only bring to Him what is already His! The silver and the gold are His as well as "the cattle upon a thousand hills." What we willingly bring to Him out of heartfelt gratitude, He will graciously accept, but if we imagine that there is any merit in what we give, He will have nothing to do with it.

12, 13. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? "Think you that there is any offering that man can present to Me which can appease My wrath, or give Me pleasure?"

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High. The offering of the heart is better than the gift from the purse. The praise and thanksgiving that come out of the very soul—these God will accept.

15, 16. And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me. [See Sermons #1505, Volume 25—

PRAYER TO GOD IN TROUBLE AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE and #1876, Volume 31—ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TEXT.] But unto the wicked, Godsays, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth? There were, in those days, wicked priests who taught the people what they did not themselves practice, just

as there are, in these days, men who because of their official position, have dared to stand up and declare the Gospel of Christ by which they were not, themselves, saved! And in which, indeed, they were not even Believers! Are they the men to preach the Truth of God? Are they fit to teach others? Assuredly not! "Unto the wicked God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?"

17-20. Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you. When you saw a thief then you consented with him, and have been partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. How, then, can you hope to please God with your formal ceremonies, with your mere attendance at the House of God while your heart is estranged from Him? You do but mock God with all this empty formalism!

21. 22. These things have you done, and I kept silence, you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this. "Consider this,' you who are full of heartless religiousness, you who are so particular in your observance of the outward forms of religion and yet do not think of God as you should—'consider this.'"

22. You that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. What a terrible God is this Jehovah whom we serve! If our hearts are not right towards Him, if we dare to mock Him with solemn sounds uttered by false tongues, this verse warns us as to how He will deal with us!

23. Whoever offers praise glorifies Me and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God. So that what God really desires is living, loving hearts and holy gracious lives and, therefore, if we do not give Him our hearts and our lives, our sacrifices and oblations are all in vain—they are an abomination in His sight!