

## **Gathering Without Planting**

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"You eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant." [Joshua 24:13](#).

THE Israelites, when they came into Canaan, entered into possession of a country which was thoroughly prepared for their occupation. There were walled cities and houses exactly adapted for their use and in habitable repair. The vineyards were in full bearing and the hills terraced ready for cultivation. They were not like emigrants to the wild west who have to clear forests and turn over prairies! They had not even to take possession of ruined cities and to rebuild them! For the most part, everything stood waiting for them, "houses full of all good things," and even "the old corn of the land" stored up for their immediate use! Moses had promised them that it would be so and Joshua reminded them of the promise when it had become a fact.

As the Holy Spirit shall help us, let us first learn from the text as it referred to Israel And then, taking the general principle here mentioned, let us learn from their case to consider our own, for we also enjoy that which we have neither produced nor earned.

I. First, then, LET US LEARN FROM THE TEXT AS IT REFERRED TO ISRAEL. They entered into possession of wells which they had not dug, cities which they had not built, olive trees and vineyards which they had not planted.

In the first place, this was a fulfillment of the ancient Covenant Although all the details of these blessings to Israel were not mentioned in the Covenant made with Abraham, yet they were virtually included—and Moses mentioned them very particularly in the 6th Chapter of Deuteronomy when he told the people to beware lest they should forget the Lord who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. So that every time an Israelite walked out into his olive garden and especially when he beat the tree to bring down its fruit, he could say to himself, "Here is the fulfillment of the promise made to our fathers." If he was a truly devout Jew, he would never gather the grapes from his vineyard, nor drink of the milk, nor taste the honey which abounded in the land without recognizing that as the Lord had spoken, so the Lord had done! Jehovah had not fallen short of His promise in any respect—He had brought His people into just such a country as He had aforetime covenanted to bestow upon them!

Now, Beloved, are not we also in very much the same position as Israel was with regard to many things around us? Why, even in temporals it is so! No good thing have we lacked, though we have sometimes feared that we would. As our days, our strength has been—and

we can truly say that the Lord has been mindful of His Covenant and that not one of His promises has failed. This is especially the case as we recollect the answers God has given to our prayers. He long ago gave the promise, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." And I, for one, have proved its truthfulness and desire to bear my testimony to the faithfulness of the Covenant-keeping God! Cannot you do the same, dear Friends? Why, I think you can hardly go into any room in your house—you cannot go to your beds, you cannot sit down at the table, you cannot walk along the street and I know that many of you cannot come to your pews in this place without thinking—"Here are the tokens of my Lord's faithfulness, goodness and truth!" You who have lived to see 60 or 70 summers have witnessed great varieties of weather, but you can bear your testimony that according to

God's Covenant, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night have not ceased! The outside world is hung with testimonies to the faithfulness of God—

"His Covenant with the earth He keeps!

My tongue, His goodness sing.

Summer and Winter know their time,

His harvest crowns the Spring." But, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when we come to think of what the Lord has done within us, can we look anywhere in our hearts, or to any faculty of our minds without perceiving evidences that the Lord is keeping His Covenant? He said, "A new heart also will I give you"—has He not given it to us? What is that heart that sorrows over conscious imperfection—what is that heart that longs after fellowship with God—what is it but that new heart that He has given to us? The Lord also said, "A new spirit will I put within you"—and what is that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father"? What is that spirit which exults with delight in the Presence of God but that new spirit which He has put within us? Has He not kept His promise? Has He not given to us a sense of pardon, a consciousness of justification through faith in His dear Son? All the work of the Holy Spirit within the heart, if I were to speak upon it in detail, would only be a testimony that the Lord keeps the Covenant of His Grace which He made with us in the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son, even as He kept with Israel that ancient Covenant which He made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob—

"Firm as the lasting hills,

This Covenant shall endure,

Whose potent shalls and wills

Make every blessing sure!

When ruin shakes all Nature's frame,

Its jots and tittles stand the same." But, secondly, these blessings were to Israel pledges of all the rest of the Words of God. In that 6th Chapter of Deuteronomy where Moses speaks

of the people having houses full of all good things which they did not fill, and wells which they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees which they did not plant, he also commanded them to keep the Words of the Lord in their hearts, to teach them to their children, to talk of them as they sat in the house or walked by the way, to bind them upon their hands and as frontlets between their eyes and to write them upon the posts and gates of their houses. Do you see what was the drift of the argument of Moses? Was it not just this—If God's Words of promise have been so rich and so weighty that they have brought Israel into the possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, should not Israel now guard most jealously all the Words of God? I know how the children of God learn to prize His promises. Their soul has lived by the month together upon a single promise, and it has been enough to feast their spirits. In another time of distress they have rested upon another promise and in this way, through their experience, the promises have become exceedingly precious to them!

This kind of experience should teach us the preciousness of the Word of God as a whole so that we would not part with a single letter of it and would not give up even the dot of an i or the cross of a t! I always deprecate the spirit which tries to tamper with the Word of God. I admire them who have sufficient knowledge of the ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures to tell us, as nearly as they can ascertain them, what were the original Hebrew and Greek words, but I dearly deplore that kind of spirit which, after the style of a destructive parrot, seeks to tear the Scriptures to pieces and to rob the children of God of their priceless possession! Why, even a solitary Divine precept is so precious that if all the saints in the world were burnt at one stake for the defense of it—it would be well worth the holocaust! If the whole of us went to prison and to death for the preservation of a single sentence of Scripture, we would be fully justified in making such a sacrifice. If I were to ask some of the broad school of the present day whether there is any Doctrine in the Bible that would justify a person in being a martyr for it, I believe they would be compelled to answer, "No. The whole thing is a mere matter of opinion to us." But it is not a matter of opinion to us! The Word of God is to us an Infallible Revelation of the Eternal Truth of God and that part of it which has already been proved to be true to us is the seal and pledge that the whole of it is true and precious! When the Israelite walked in the olive groves and vineyard that he had not, himself, planted—and when he ate the olives and grapes, he would see in them pledges that all the Words of God would be fulfilled as surely as that one promise had been!

Thirdly, these people, in entering into possession of vineyards and olive groves which they had not planted, must naturally have regarded them as reminders of God's judgments upon sin." "I sit under this olive tree," mused the devout Israelite, "and I eat of its fruit. I walk in this vineyard, gather the grapes and eat them. I did not plant these trees and vines, yet they are mine—how came I by them? Where are their original owners? They were slain by Joshua at the command of God because of the shameful abominations with which they

filled the land." And the lesson that a gracious man would learn from this would be, "I must, therefore, cleave closely to the one living and true God and must not set up idols in His place. And I must diligently seek to know His will and to do it, so that I may not offend the great Jehovah whose wrath is so terrible against evil of every kind."

There is something, dear Friends, in your position and mine, which is analogous to this. We live in a land of many privileges, yet we must not forget that other inhabitants were here before us—and that druidic and other abominations were swept away! And even since we have flourished as a nation, other nations have been destroyed. Let them be warnings to us and let us not continue to grieve the Most High by national sins which might well bring down upon us the righteous judgments of God! Especially do we need to be on our guard against the Popery that is seeking again to enslave and degrade this fair land of ours—and at all costs to defend that faith for which our forefathers suffered and died!

Then, next, these vineyards and olive groves, possessed by those who had not planted them, were claims upon them for service. They were commanded by Moses to love with all their heart, and soul, and might that God who had given them the land flowing with milk and honey and all the blessings that they found in it. All He asked of them was that they should worship Him, alone, dedicate to Him the tenth of all their substance and seek to make the whole land to be holiness unto the Lord. Because He had brought them up out of Egypt and settled them in Canaan, they were bound to be His faithful servants. And, Beloved, how many voices are calling upon us who have been spiritually brought up out of Egypt into the place of Covenant privileges to serve the living God! Let others serve whomever they will—we are bound to the Lord by the cords of a man and the bands of love! If you, my Brother, forsook the service of the Most High, whose service could you enter? Where could you find a king or prince worthy of your homage and devotion? There are some of us here to whom it is our very life to serve our God! His love has won us and will hold us fast forever! If the Israelite, sitting under his olives and vines, felt that He was so deeply indebted to God that He must serve Him, much more should you and I, sitting under the Tree of Life which bears all manner of fruits, feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price and that, therefore, we will henceforth serve Him who has given to us such priceless blessings! Do you not feel thus, Beloved? I trust that the Holy Spirit will press this Truth of God home upon your hearts that it may be worked out in your lives.

II. Now, having spoken thus concerning the children of Israel, and somewhat also concerning ourselves, I want to bring out THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE AND ITS LESSONS FOR OURSELVES.

First as the Israelites ate the fruit of the tree which they had not planted, we have many similar blessings which impose corresponding obligations upon us. It would be impossible for me to go over the full list of the things which we have which are like cities which we did not build, like houses which we did not furnish, like trees which we did not plant and garden

plots which we did not till. The great hulk of the things that we have—and certainly all the best things—are pure gifts of God's Grace bestowed upon us freely out of the goodness and love of His heart!

In the very forefront we must put the great blessings of the Covenant. We had nothing to do with our own election unto Eternal Life. He who chose us, chose us according to His own good pleasure. He knows why He chose us, but that reason is not known to us and certainly cannot be found in ourselves! I never met with anybody who ever thought that he deserved to be chosen unto salvation—the very fact of the choice proves that it must have been all of Grace. Then as to the blessed redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we have been washed in a Fountain that we never filled and we are this day clothed in a righteousness that we did not weave! No, we did not even arrange one thread of that spotless robe! The blood and righteousness of Christ become ours purely by an act of His Grace. It would be a most monstrous thing for anybody to say that he deserved that Christ should die for him—such a Sacrifice as He offered on Calvary's Cross must have been one of pure unmingled Grace! It would be a mistake in language, a contradiction in thought even to suggest that there was some measure of deserving about any of those sinners for whom Christ died! Oh, no! This good olive tree is one that we did not plant! This vine is of the Lord's own right-hand planting—and the oil and the wine that flow from them are the gifts of God's Grace! What I have said about election and redemption applies equally to adoption, sanctification and all the other blessings of the Covenant. These are fruits from a tree that we did not plant—God has given them to us freely of His Grace.

This general principle also applies very specially to the record of these priceless gifts of Grace, that Book of God which has been well called, "the God of books." Every leaf of that Book is of more value than a bank-note for millions of pounds! Every line is more precious than diamonds and every letter is worth more than the costliest gems. You know well enough, dear Friends, that you and I never wrote even a single letter of that blessed record—it is as much as we can do to understand it—and even that is not possible without the teaching of the Holy Spirit! We can scarcely calculate how much we owe to those "holy men of old" who, under the Spirit's guidance, planted this vineyard from which we are continually gathering such rich clusters! Think, too, how much we are indebted, under God, to those who were the means of preserving this record and handing it down to us, often at the cost of their own lives. Every page of this Bible is, as it were, splattered with the blood of the martyrs, yet we have not had to pay that price for it—we draw the life-giving water out of wells that we did not dig and eat the fruit of the sacred tree that we did not plant!

Then, Beloved, think of the ministry of the Word by which the Scriptures are opened up to us. How is it that we have the Gospel preached today in this land without let or hindrance? We owe it largely to the humble men and women, tailors, weavers and the like, yes, and to faithful ministers and even bishops who would not give up the Truth of God in

the dark days of our country's past history. That "candle" of which brave Hugh Latimer spoke to Bishop Ridley is still alight in England, but we did not light it, nor have we had to suffer as they and thousands of others did to keep it alight! We scarcely realize how much we owe to those true heroes of the faith of whom Foxe tells us in his martyrology, and to the many others whose names are unknown to us—and whose praises are unsung by men! When we talk of our open Bible, and of this free England of ours, and when we observe the ordinances of our holy religion as they were instituted by Christ, Himself, let us never forget that these are like the vineyards and olive groves of Canaan which the Israelites did not plant, but of which they enjoyed the fruit!

Think, also, how much we owe to those who struggled and suffered to obtain for us the civil and religious liberty which is our heritage today. There are some of our old sanctuaries still standing where our godly ancestors met to worship God five miles away from the nearest market town lest their minister should be fined or imprisoned for daring to speak publicly in God's name! Whenever I visit such places, the tears come into my eyes as I think of those good men still standing fast in poverty and disgrace—and proclaiming that Gospel which they have handed down to us! In the gracious Providence of God, we enjoy liberty which I fear we do not value half as much as we ought. So, tonight, as we sit in these olive groves and vineyards which we did not plant, and as we eat the comforting and refreshing fruit, let us bless the Lord for the happy lot which has been so graciously prepared for us!

I have thus mentioned a few of the many blessings that make up our goodly heritage. And you can, each one, apply the general principle to your own case. I need, in closing, to remind you of the obligations imposed upon us by these blessings which have been provided for us. I think that our first obligation is to humility. What have you there, worthy Israelite? "A good crop of olives." But how did you get those olive trees? You certainly did not plant them and you did not build that fine house, nor lay out the vines that are growing all round it. Oh, no! You drove out the old owner and God gave it to you for your own possession! You are living in a city that is enclosed by solid walls composed of massive stones, but you did not build it—you would not even know how to move the stones and set them so firmly one upon another. Ah, there were giants or giant-like men in those old days who did all that for you—and you are now virtually living in an almshouse which the great God of Canaan had allowed others to fit up for your reception!

And that is very much the condition of every one of us. As for myself, I am a gentleman commoner dependent upon the daily bounty of God—and I suspect that most of you who are now present are in a similar position. Whenever we begin to grow proud because we are getting on in the world, how foolish we are—and the proudest man is the biggest fool! We are all fools when we are proud at all—and as we increase in pride, we increase in folly. Have you, my Friend, ten talents entrusted to you? What an anxiety it must be to you to use them aright for your Master! I am almost sorry for you that you have such a responsibility.

Yet you are proud of it—then I am still more sorry for you. There is nothing to be proud of in being in debt—and you are in debt to your Lord for those ten talents, for He only lent them to you and He will expect to receive from you an account of how you have put them out to interest on His behalf! The more we have,

the more we are indebted to God—so, in proportion as His mercy to us rises, let us sink in our own esteem and lie at His feet in adoring humility!

Our next obligation is to gratitude. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they brought very little with them. A miracle was continually being worked so that their clothes waxed not old during their long wandering in the wilderness. Their food dropped daily from Heaven and water to quench their thirst poured out from the smitten Rock—they were a company of paupers grandly sustained by their God! And when they entered into possession of the promised land, where were their title-deeds? They could not trace their ownership through a long line of ancestors, but every conveyance contained just one sentence, "The Lord your God gave you this land." They owed everything to the goodness of God and, therefore, they were bound to be grateful to Him! And we who realize that every good thing that we have received has come to us by the free favor of our God, are bound to be grateful to Him. I hope we are in a measure grateful to Him, but when we contrast our gratitude with the blessings which God has given us, we thank Him for what we feel, but we mourn that there is so little of it. May He give us Grace to feel far more grateful than we have ever yet been!—

"Oh let my house a temple be, That I and mine may sing Hosanna to God's majesty And praise our heavenly King!"

Our next obligation is to faithfulness. When a man receives an inheritance to which he has contributed nothing whatever, he is at least bound to keep up the estate. I have already reminded you that we have come into the possession of a Bible that we did not write, a Gospel that we could never have invented and the ministration of the Word has been maintained in this land by those who have gone before us, so that we have come into this glorious inheritance like the heirs to a family estate! Now, the very least thing that we can do is to keep up the estate. Others died to preserve it intact for us, so let us not allow it to suffer as long as we have the care of it. If I had been one of the Israelites in Canaan, I think I would have said to myself, "I will keep this place with the utmost care, so that it shall not be injured while it is in my charge. I have only a life interest in it, so I will pass it on to my successor in as good a condition as when I entered into possession of it." So, Beloved, let not the Gospel suffer any loss by you. The Church of God is put in trust with it, so let not future generations have to say concerning this period in which we are living, "There was a sad degeneration at that particular time. Christians were not steadfast, then—they trifled with Truth of God—they wanted something new. Worldlings called them fools and they began to think they were. They ran after this philosophy and that, and left the grand old

Gospel of the Grace of God, or adulterated it with the so-called wisdom of men, which is foolishness in the sight of God." I pray that this may not be the case, but that God will raise up a great host of those who will maintain the Truth, unsullied, and hand it down to posterity uninjured. You did not plant the vines and olive trees, so do not cut them down! You did not dig the well from which you are drawing water, so do not let anybody fill it up. Be faithful to God at all times—contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—and let it never suffer at your hands.

There is also our obligation of service to coming generations. Who planted those vines and olive trees? Those who came before us. Then let us plant more for those who will come after us. Other people maintained the Truth in years gone by and taught it to their children—and their children taught it to us—so let us teach it to our children that in due course they may also teach it to their children! We do not believe in oral tradition as an authority in the Church of God, but we do believe in oral instruction as a most important agency in propagating the Truth of God. Books are too often left unread—we need living men to speak the Living Word! Do not any of you imagine because your children can get good books, that you are exonerated from speaking to them personally about their souls! Mother, you are the best instructor that your child can have. Father, your loving, gracious talk with your boy will have more effect upon him than any book you can give him. Even the Bible itself he may leave unread when he leaves home—but if you have spoken earnestly and affectionately to him and prayed with him while he was under your roof, he will not be able to forget that! The teaching of the children is the very bulwark of Christianity and Protestantism—and the teaching should be given to them by their own parents if they are Christians, or in our Sunday schools and Ragged schools if the parents are not themselves qualified to give it. Why, if we neglect the rising generation, surely our fathers' blessings upon us will curdle into curses! They taught us and prayed with us—and their parents taught them and prayed with them—and therefore there is a godly seed still in the land!

So shall we now neglect to train our own children, or shall our Sunday schools lack teachers, as is so often the case? I pray that it may not be so with you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. In whatever part of London or anywhere else that you dwell, search out the schools where teachers are needed and offer your services. I speak especially to you who have ripe experience, for it is not right that this important service should be left to boys and girls. God bless the young people who are doing their part of the work so well—but why should not middle life with its vigor, and even old age with its sweetness and maturity, be found in the Sunday school? We have inherited from our ancestry what we are bound to pass on to our posterity! If I could, I would be a blessing to all succeeding ages as well as to the one in which I am living. So, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, do all the good you can while you live—and leave a gracious memory behind you when you are no longer here. Plant as many vines and olive trees as you can, for though you may not be spared to gather the fruit from them,



somebody will reap the benefit when you have been called to higher service! I like that kind of benevolence which does not always ask to see those whom it blesses, but which finds satisfaction in doing good simply for the Glory of God. Try to be disinterested—do not say, "I must see something for my money." Oh, no, no! Your wondrous inheritance of innumerable blessings, for which you never toiled, came to you from the unseen source of Divine, Eternal Beneficence, so seek to catch something of that same spirit by building cities, digging wells, furnishing houses and planting vineyards and olive groves for those whom you will never see until, by Grace, you meet them in the general assembly and Church of the First-Born in your Father's House on high!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 PETER 1:9-21.

[This is concluded from Sermon #3245, Volume 57—OUR POSITION AND OUR PURPOSE.]

9. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off He is short-sighted. He has some light, and some physical sight, but he cannot see at a distance. Spiritually, he is blind.

9. And has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. It is a great mercy not merely to see men as trees walking, but to have clear spiritual vision. There is a great deal of dust that gets into our eyes—and there is no way of clearing out that dust and becoming long-sighted, getting a sight that can see to Heaven—except by getting that spiritual life which manifests itself in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

10. Therefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things you shall never fall This is the second time that Peter writes about giving diligence. We are told not to be slothful in business and this matter of which Peter write is the most important of all business! To prosper in this world may bring some advantages, but to prosper in heavenly things is infinitely better! "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"—that you may be sure of it and that others may be sure of it, too. Let it not continue a subject of question with you, "Am I the Lord's, or am I not? Am I called by Grace, am I chosen by God, or am I not?" Make these things sure beyond all doubt!

11. For so an entrance shall be supplied unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ. [See Sermon #123, Volume 3—PARTICULAR ELECTION.] You

shall get far into the Kingdom—you shall know the innermost joys of it! You shall get near the King and you shall become like the King—and when you come to die, you shall not be tugged into the harbor like a dismasted, water-logged vessel, but you shall go in like a full-rigged ship with all sails set! And so you shall have an abundant entrance into the fair haven of Eternal Happiness. May God grant us this unspeakable blessedness, so that we shall not "be saved, yet so as by fire" but that we shall find our Heaven begun below—and

go from Heaven below to Heaven above scarcely knowing any change at all! There have been saints who have found the stream of Christ's love running so strongly and carrying them down to the great ocean of Eternal Life, that they have scarcely known where the river and the ocean have met!

12. Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things. He who exhorts others to be diligent must not himself be negligent. And Peter most appropriately writes, "Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things."

12. Though you know them, and are established in the present truth. We need to preach the Truth of God continually, for even those who know it need to be reminded of it again and again. Truth unpublished is like seed laid up in a florist's shop—it does not produce any result. We need to have the Truth constantly sown in our hearts and watered by the Holy Spirit that it may grow and bring forth fruit.

13. Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. When people are as they should be, it is worthwhile to stir them up. You do not want to stir up dirty water, but you may stir that which is pure and sweet as much as you like. And a good fire sometimes becomes a better one by a little stirring up.

14. Knowing that shortly I must put off this, my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. The Lord had told Peter how he was to die. He had told him that he would die by crucifixion—"When you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and carry you where you would not." He knew that the day of his martyrdom was approaching and so, being Divinely warned, he was the more earnest to preach as a dying man to dying men! I have sometimes heard, as a criticism of that expression of Baxter's about a dying man preaching to dying men, the remark that it would be better as living men, to preach to living men. It is quite true that we must throw all our life into our preaching, but, as a rule, living men are never more truly alive than when they are under a due sense that they are also dying men! When we realize that eternity is very near us and we are consciously drawing near to the Great Judgment Seat of Christ, than all our faculties are fully awakened and our whole being is bent on doing the Master's work with the utmost vigor and earnestness!

15. Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance. When we are gone from the earth, we want the Truth of God that we have spoken to live on after us. We want, even from our graves, to continue to speak for Christ. Therefore it was that Peter kept on repeating the same Truth over and over again. He hit this nail on the head many times and sought to clinch it—so that when he was gone, it would not move from its place, but would remain firmly fixed.

16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables. He had no retractions to make as he came towards the close of his ministry. He did not have to say that, after all, he had

been greatly mistaken—there had been an advance in theology since Jesus Christ had died and he was sorry to say that he had preached a good deal when he was young which he would like to unsay now that he was old. Oh, no! Peter held fast to what he had previously preached because he knew that it was the very Truth of God! And the other Apostles had done the same, so that Peter could write, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables"—

16. When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Peter was one of the three who saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His Glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration— and he recalls this.

17, 18. For He received from God the Father, honor and Glory when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from Heaven, we heard, when we were with Him on the holy mount. Peter was not deceived about that matter! At the time, he and his fellow Apostles had been overcome by the too-transporting sight, but they all knew that it was no vision, or dream, or delusion, so Peter here speaks very positively concerning it. Why can we not receive the testimony of true witnesses such as Peter and the other Apostles who sealed with their life's blood the witness which they bore to their Lord and His Truth?

19. We have also a more sure Word of prophecy. Can anything be more sure than that which an eyewitness sees? Well, Peter says that this prophetic Book, in which Holy Scripture is stored up is better to us than if we had even seen Christ Himself! If any one thing is more sure than another, it is this blessed book—the Revelation of the Christ of God!

19, 20. Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark-place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. It is not to be kept by any man to himself. God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and we read concerning it, in [Hosea 12:4](#), "there He spoke with us." With regard to the children of Israel rejoicing at the Red Sea, we read, in the 66th Psalm, "There did we rejoice in Him." The promises God made to this believing man or that, He makes to all believing men! You remember that text, "He has said I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? That promise was first of all spoken to Joshua, yet Paul quoted it in writing the Epistle to the Hebrews, as if it was spoken to every Believer—and so, indeed, it is! No Apostle, no Prophet could hedge up a promise and say, "This was mine and nobody else's." It is a common heritage of all the saints! Every promise is within the boundary of the Covenant of Grace, and all who are in that Covenant are heirs of all the promises, to whomever they were made!

21. For prophecy never came by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit This is the foundation of our faith—that this Book is Divinely Inspired! Allow nobody to make you doubt concerning this matter, for you must give up Christianity, itself, if you give up the Inspiration of this Book! You have nothing else to fall back upon but this Book—and your own personal verification of it by the work of the Holy

Spirit in your own soul! To tamper with Inspiration is to tamper with the heart of true religion! The least doubt upon that matter is fatal. I mean what I say and I know how desperately this mischief is working in these days in which we live. Men used to say, with the famous Chillingworth, "The Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of Protestants." And so it once was. Yet now it seems to me that anything but the Bible is coming to be their religion but, as for us, we accept as authoritative nothing that contradicts these Truths of God which are written in this Book! We mean to stand fast by these Truths, God helping us. We can do no other, come what may in this evil age. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."