

Ho! Ho!

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." [Isaiah 55:1](#).

THERE is a thirst which is peculiar to the Believer. He can say with David, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God." Delightful thirst! Would God we had more of it! May we be longing and panting after our God in that sense until we shall be filled with His Spirit and shall dwell in His Presence to go no more out forever!

But I wish now to speak of another kind of thirst to another class of thirsting ones, who thirst they scarcely know for what. They have a sense of unrest, of longing, of yearning—yet they have a very indistinct idea of what it is their souls are pining for. It may be that they will find out presently what it is their thirst requires. Better still, if perhaps, by God's blessing, that thirst shall be quenched by their drinking that Living Water of which they are bidden freely to take.

I shall not detain you with a long preface, nor, indeed, with a long discourse. I will try to make each portion of my address brief, practical and pointed. May the Holy Spirit make it effectual!

Learn from my text that God has made plenteous soul-provision and that to every thirsty soul this provision is perfectly free and gratuitous.

I. In the first place, GOD HAS MADE AN ABUNDANT SOUL-PROVISION.

We read here of "water." Water has been pronounced the simplest, purest, fittest drink for all persons of all ages and temperaments. Now, there is a thirst in man's body which makes him require drink. He drinks and that thirst is removed. There is a similar thirst in man's spiritual nature. He needs something and he feels uneasy until he gets it. The Grace of God, which is proclaimed to us in Christ Jesus, is that which meets the longing of man. That is the spiritual water for man's spiritual thirst. In the text, the word is put in the plural, "Come you to the waters," I suppose to show the abundance thereof, as though there were many rivers of it, so that none might fear that they should require more than was provided—

"Rivers of love and mercy here

In a rich ocean join.

Salvation in abundance flows,

Like floods of milk and wine.

Great God, the treasures of Your love

Are everlasting mines—

Deep as our helpless miseries are,

And boundless as our sins."

The mercy of God is not a little brook which can be almost drained up by a passing ox, but it is a vast river—it is many rivers, rivers to swim in! "Ho, everyone that thirsts!" Stand not back because you think there is not enough, but come you to the waters!

Or the word may be in the plural to signify variety. The soul needs many things. Viewing eternity, God and judgment from different points of view, it needs manifold and multitudinous mercies. They are all provided and the word, "waters," indicates that many fresh springs of consolation are ready for those who thirst for all spiritual blessings as soon as the eye sees or the ear hears tell of them! You need not fear if you need the pardon of sin, or the renewal of your nature, or guidance in perplexity, or comfort in distress—you need not fear but what you shall find it. "Come you to the waters." There is an infinite variety in the Grace of God! He is called "the God of all Grace." All the Grace that all the

sinner that ever come to Him can need, they shall find stored up in the Gospel provisions of the Covenant of Grace. "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters," for God has provided for soul-needs in plentiful abundance and endless variety!

Now, are you thirsting? It surely is not the mere play of imagination, but the sober apprehension of a fact that convinces me there are persons here who are thirsting in a spiritual sense. I think one of them says, "I thirst, I thirst to have my sins forgiven and to be reconciled to God. I know that I have done wrong—for me to plead that I have been innocent would be to add a lie to all my other iniquities. I am sensible in my inmost heart that I have both by omission and commission, transgressed the Divine Law. I deserve punishment, but I would that, by some means, I might be put into the Divine favor. I cannot bear to think that God should be angry with me every day! Once I laughed at this, but now I feel its meaning and it is like an arrow sticking in my loins. Oh, that I could have my Maker to be my Friend! I cannot fight the battle with Him—He could crush me in a moment! I would, therefore, cast down the weapons of my rebellion and be reconciled to Him." Come, then, you thirsty one, come and have what you need! Come and put your trust in Jesus and your sin is forgiven and you are reconciled—for, far off as you are, you shall be brought near by the blood of Christ! Do you know how? It is thus—God must punish sin. Your sin has incurred penalty, but He exacted your debt from your Surety. He punished Jesus for your sins which you have committed, if you believe in Jesus as your Substitute! He endured, that you might never endure, the whole of the Divine wrath! God can now, therefore, without marring His justice, reconcile to Himself the offending sinner, be agreed with him, receive him into friendship, yes, receive him into sonship and adopt him as His child! That troubled conscience of yours will soon have peace if you will but trust in the bleeding Sacrifice of the Lamb of God for slain sinners! Put your hands upon His dear head, once crowned with thorns for you, and you shall prove that God is our Friend, and know that your sin is forgiven! Ho, everyone

that thirsts for pardon and for reconciliation, come you to the waters, and have there your desire!

I think I hear another say, "I desire that same blessing, but I need something more. I want to conquer the sin that dwells in me. I want to be pure and holy! I cannot bear to be in the future what I have been in the past! I feel the chains of habit that bind me—I need to snap them off. I would no longer be an example of vice—I want to be a pattern of everything that is lovely and of good repute. But I have struggled against sin and it gets the mastery over me. I do for a time escape, but still I bear my fetters upon me and am dragged back to my prison. I cannot be what I would, oh, that I could escape from the power of sin!" Ah, you thirsty one, it is a blessed thing to desire as you desire! And let me tell you that God will give you the desire of your heart, for Jesus died that He might deliver His people from the power of Satan! He came on purpose that He might destroy the power of sin in His people and make them so free that they should not serve sin, but become a people zealous for good works. If you will come to Jesus and simply believe in Him—that is, rely upon Him, trust Him—His Grace will come and refine you, implanting a new nature, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh—and you shall yet put your foot upon the neck of all your corruptions! You shall cast them out little by little, and you shall be made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! Ho, everyone that thirsts for purity and virtue and for victory over indwelling sin, let him come to the waters that flowed with the blood from Jesus' side—and let him taste and his thirst shall be appeased forever!

In some persons this soul-thirst takes the shape of an anxious desire for perseverance and security. "I would like," says one, "oh, how I would like to know myself saved, and so saved that I never can be lost! Would that I could get on the Rock and feel the steadfastness of my refuge, that I might be able to sing—

"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible Grace!"

I recollect how I longed and panted after this, for no salvation ever seemed to me to be worth the having that would not last me to the end. No sign of Grace within seemed worth the having, but a sign that could never be cut off. The dread, "perhaps," haunted me lest the enterprise should be, after all, a failure, and the prospect of final deliverance should be defeated by some superior power of evil. I wanted the indwelling of Eternal Life, of that incorruptible life which lives and abides forever! Now, such a life as this it is that we read of in the Bible. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You who want security, who wish to know that you are saved and to rejoice in it,

may well listen to these words—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." If you come to Christ for this blessed satisfaction, you shall have it! Give yourselves up to Christ and you shall sing, in the words of our song—

"I know that safe with Him remains Protected by His power, What I've committed to His hands Till the decisive hour."

Yes, be your thirst for pardon, for reconciliation, for sanctification, for deliverance from sin, or for perseverance and safety, you shall have any and all of these in the waters which God has made to flow!

There are persons in the world, however, whose thirst takes another form. They have a thirst for knowledge. They want to know, to know infallibly. Through how many theories some people wade! There are minds so naturally inclined for cavil and controversy, for reasoning and reconsidering, that the more they study, the more skeptical they grow. Always learning, they never come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. "Oh," such a man seems to say, "if I could but get hold of something that was true, some fact, some certainty." Well, Sir, if you thirst for this, let your soul be given up to a belief in Christ and you shall soon find certainty! I believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is so certain a truth to that man who has believed it, that it is so verified to his inner consciousness, and so interweaves itself with his entire being that no proposition of Euclid could ever be more demonstrable, or more absolutely conclusive! We have known and believed the Revelation that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. We have tasted, felt and handled the good Word of Life. I know, and many here know, that since we have believed in Jesus we have come to live in an entirely new world. We have broken through the veil that parted us from a kingdom of which we know nothing, and we have been brought into this new Kingdom and live in it, and are as conscious of new sensations, new emotions, new sorrows and new joys as we are conscious of the old sensations which we possessed before! It is true, Sirs, certainly true! Have not our martyrs stood at the stake and burnt for this Truth of God? That is a stern Truth for which a man will dare to burn! Twisted as their nerves and muscles were upon the rack, and their very hearts searched after with hot claws of fire by their tormentors, yet have they learned to sing in the midst of anguish, to tell of present enjoyment and to triumph in the absolute Truth of the Doctrine whereof they were the witnesses! If you need to get your foot upon a bit of rock, to feel your footing and express your conviction—"Now, this is true whatever else is not"—you must believe in Jesus Christ! Then you will be no more shifted about like an unguided vessel by every wind and every current, but you will be sailing with the heavenly Pilot on board, directing you to the haven of everlasting peace!

But there are those whose thirst is that of the heart. It is not so much something to believe as something to love which they need. Well, my dear Friend, if you would have something worthy of your affection, a Person whom you may love to the fullest possible extent and never be deceived, whom you may adore and never become an idolater, let me say to

you—Come you to the waters, and drink of the love of Christ, for they that love Him much may love Him more—they cannot love Him too much! He never disappoints any confidence that is reposed in Him. His dear, sweet love which He pours into the souls of those who love Him is recompense for any sorrow they may have endured for His sake—a recompense that makes them forget their wrongs and woes in the exceeding weight of glory which it entails!

Oh, did you but know my Master, you would find out that to know Him is to love Him! All things else in this world are insignificant in comparison with Him. As a candle is not to be compared to the sun at noonday, so the joys of this world are not worthy to be mentioned in the same century as the joys of communion with Christ! Get this, and you shall have overflowing joy! You shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness and drink of the wines on the lees well-refined!

But time would fail me if I were to try to mention all the different forms of soul-thirst. Whatever they may be, God has provided a supply for them all. Sinner, you cannot need anything which God cannot give you! Your soul cannot crave for anything but He can bestow it. You cannot be so soul-sick but He has medicine that will heal you. You cannot be so naked but He can clothe you, nor so black but He can wash you, nor so devilish but He can sanctify you, nor so near being damned but He can save you! Christ is All-in-All. If you are just now ready to die. If you have brought yourself down to the gates of the grave by your sin. If you are suffering in the body the results of your iniquities. If your own conscience has pronounced on you the dread sentence of doom—know this—my Master's arm is strong, and long as well as strong! He is able to reach the worst, the vilest, and the most abandoned! And when He once reaches them, He will never let go of them till He has taken them out of the miry clay, out of the horrible pit and set their feet upon a rock and estab-

lished their goings! I wish I had an angel's tongue, or could sound a trumpet that would be heard right round this world! How loudly, then, would I proclaim the glad tidings that God has in store for needy ones—everything they need! No sinner need die of famine, for there is no famine in this land of Grace. No traveler through this world needs to die of thirst, for the well is deep, and it eternally springs up. No sinner needs to starve, for the oxen and fatlings are killed and the Gospel message is, "Come, for all things are ready." God grant that knowing how bountifully all these things are provided, we may, none of us, keep back, turn a deaf ear to the general call, refuse the special invitation, slight the Grace, or scorn the Gospel!

II. Observe, secondly, that THE GOSPEL PROVISIONS ARE FREE TO ALL THIRSTY SOULS.

Do you notice the first word of the text? "Ho!" That is like the cry of the salesman at a fair. He calls out to passersby, "Ho! Look! listen! Turn here! Here is a bargain—something worth your attention!" So God condescends, as it were, to cry out to those who are busy with this world's cares, its business and its barter, its buying and selling, "Ho! Ho! Ho! Here

is something worth your minding, you that would be rich at little cost, you that are in want, you that are in need, you that would find something that shall exactly meet your case." Ho!—this is the Gospel note! A short, significant appeal, urging you to be wise enough to attend to your own interests. Oh, the condescension of God—that He should, as it were, become a beggar to His own creature and stoop from the magnificence of His Glory to cry, "Ho!" to foolish and ungrateful men!

Notice the next words, "Ho! Everyone"—not some of you that thirst, but everyone—you rich ones, you poor ones, you great men, you little men, you old people, you young folk. "Ho! Everyone that thirsts." Now, it does not say, "Everyone except—except—except." No, no! Here is an amnesty published without exception or exemption. Here is an invitation given to every longing, thirsting one—and not a single name struck out—"Ho! Everyone that thirsts."

And then it is added, "come." Not, "make yourselves ready." Not, "bring your money," or, "prove your title," but, "come!" Come just as you are. The coming is believing, trusting. Believe, trust, then, while you are as you are! Rely upon Christ—"come you to the waters." Come now. Read the invitation for yourselves. It is written in the present tense. Obey the summons—come, come at once! Though you have no money, you may come and take a drink, for it is freely provided for you. As I walked over a long sandy road one day last week when the weather was sultry and the heat far beyond our common experience in this country—almost tropical—I saw a little stream of cool water and, being parched with thirst, I stooped down and drank. Do you think I asked anybody's permission, or enquired whether I might drink or not? I didn't know to whom it belonged and I didn't care! There it was and I felt, as it was there, it was enough for me. Nobody was there to call out, "Ho!" My inward craving called out, "Ho!" I was thirsty and water was there inviting to my taste! I noticed, after I had drunk, that two poor tramps came along and they stooped down and drank in like manner. I didn't find anybody marching them off to prison. There was the stream—and the stream being there, and the thirsty men being there—the supply was suited to their need and they promptly partook of it. How strange it is that when God had provided this Gospel, and men need it, they should require somebody to call out to them, Ho! Ho! Ho! And then they will not come, after all! Oh, if they were a little more thirsty, if they did but know their need more, if they were more convinced of their sin—then they would scarcely need an invitation, but the mere fact of a supply would be sufficient for them and they would come and drink—and satisfy the burning thirst within.

Now, although the Gospel provision is free to all thirsty souls, there are many who cannot believe this. Some cannot believe it because they stumble at the Doctrines. What Doctrine frightens you, dear Friend? Is it the Doctrine of Election? Well now, I believe the Doctrine of Election, and I thank God that I do. It is a precious Doctrine. And let me tell you, dear Friend, that the Doctrine of Election shuts nobody out, though it shuts a great

many in. "But I may not come and trust Christ." How do you know that? God says you may—in fact, He says, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed," thus making it a sin not to believe! So you really have such a right to believe that it becomes even your duty! Whatever the Doctrine of Election may be, or may be meant to be, we will not talk of that just at present, for it is quite certain that it cannot contradict any plain practical direction of Scripture. Here is a plain text, which no one can deny, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." If, then, you believe on Jesus Christ, you are not condemned—election or no election! But let me tell you, if you believe in Christ you are one of His elect! And it is because He elected you that you come to believe in Him—it is because He chose you that you are led to desire Him and made to accept Him! Let not that Doctrine ever terrify you, or provoke your distrust, for if you rightly understand the

Revelation, it is rather a finger beckoning to Christ than a specter that should intimidate you, or drive you away from

Him!

Then your spirit of legality will tell you that the Gospel is not free to you. Why not? Oh, because you are not fit to receive it. This, I say, is a spirit of legality and is clearly contrary to the Gospel! There is no fitness needed to receive Christ! You see men go to wash. What is the fitness for washing? Why, to be dirty—and that is no fitness. All the fitness a sinner can have for Christ is simply to need Christ. If you are empty, you are fit for Christ and He will come and fill you. If you are poor, you are fit for Christ to make you rich. He that is sick is fit for a physician. He that is needy is fit for pity. He that is guilty is fit for mercy. I beseech you, get rid of that pestilent and soul-destroying idea of fitness for Christ! You cannot come to God as you are, but you may come to the Savior as you are. All black and unwashed you may come and wash in the fountain which He has opened! Let nothing, then, by way of legality, make you think that the Gospel provisions are not free to you.

But what if your unbelief should tell you that the provisions of Grace are not for you because you have been such a great sinner? Did not Jesus come into the world to save the very greatest of sinners? He said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." You may have soared as high as the mountains in your sin, but God's flood, like, that of Noah, can go over the tops of all your iniquities! Do not limit the Holy One of Israel by your unbelief! Believe Him and you shall be forgiven, even though you were worse than you are!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters! Whatever the devil may say, and whatever your irritated conscience may say against the freeness of God's mercy, I tell you solemnly it is as free to every thirsty one as the drinking fountain at the street corner! It is as free as the air that blows over the mountain and into the valleys—free to every lung that breathes—so free is the mercy of God! God stints not His mercy when men need it. Be they but thirsty, let them but long for it, and they shall have it! If there is any difficulty, it is on your part, not on God's

part. You are not straitened in Him—you are straitened in yourselves. O guilty Sinners, if you find no mercy, it is not because God is unwilling to give, but because you will not trust Him! Because you will not think that He can save you! The prodigal never could have believed his father's heart to be so kind as it was had he not tried and proved it. Come and try my Master's heart! I tell you that He will blot out your sins like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud! Only rest on Him and you shall find Him better than you ever dreamed Him to be! As for my words, they cannot fully set Him forth. May you be brought to try Him, for then you will be sure to find that He is a mighty Savior!

The provisions of Grace must be free to thirsty ones, why else were they provided? Why should there be a Savior for sinners if God will not give salvation to sinners? Why those wounds? Why that bloody sweat? Why that crown of thorns, why those expiring throes if God will not receive sinners? The dying Savior is the best answer to the caviling of unbelievers. He must be willing to forgive who spared not His own Son! If the Gospel were not free to thirsty ones, why is it published? If it were not meant for you, why are we bid to tell it to you and to continue sounding it in your ears? If it were meant for a few in a corner, why publish it in the streets? Why gather the crowds together, as we are bound to do, and find out those in the highways and hedges with a mandate to compel them to come in? Why do all this if God intends to bar the door in their faces? The very fact that the Gospel is preached to the sinner is God's love-token that He will accept you if you will come to Him! Why is there a Mercy Seat? Why are you allowed to pray? Why are you bid to pray, if God will not hear? This were a mockery of which you cannot accuse God—that He should encourage a sinner to pray with no intention of hearing him! Let me ask you again—How is it that others have found God's mercy so free when they have come and trusted Christ? Why is that multitude in Heaven, all once as guilty as you are, but all having washed their robes in the precious blood of Jesus? Why those on earth who have found peace? They had nothing to recommend them any more than you have. They will all tell you that they came just as they were, in all their rags and beggary, and Jesus did not reject them. No, glory be to His name, He received us freely!

Come, then, fellow Sinners, come! May the eternal Spirit draw you now! Even now, "come you to the waters." Though you have no money and no price and no goodness, come and rest in Jesus and find everlasting life! Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." That is my message. There is your welcome. Come! Do come! So my errand will speed. So your souls will be blessed. So God's name will be glorified! Amen.

ISAIAH55.

Verse 1. Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. [See Sermons #1161, Volume 20—without money and without price and #1726, Volume 29—BUYING WITHOUT MONEY.] The description of Gospel

blessings grows sweeter as it advances. "Waters" first, "wine and milk" next, and still all "without money and without price." We preach no narrow salvation—we rejoice in the Covenant of Grace—it is the backbone of our theology, but the Gospel has wide arms, a loud voice and persuasive tones! "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." In Christ there is a full supply for all our necessities—bread and water and yes, there are luxuries sufficient for our largest desires—wine and milk and He wants us to bring nothing in payment for them! "Without money and without price." That is, indeed, Free Grace! Some people object to that expression and say that it is tautology, for Grace must be free—but we mean to keep on using it that all may know that Grace is free, gratis, all for nothing!

2. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? The less value there is in any religion, the more you have to pay for it. The pardon that costs a shilling is not worth a farthing, but that which costs us nothing is worth more than the whole world!

2. Harken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. [See Sermons

#2278, Volume 38—FEEDING ON THE WORD and #2786, Volume 48—THE SOUL'S BEST FOOD.] All that your largest desires can long for, you will find in Christ. You shall have not only necessities, but delicacies, delights that shall satisfy you to the fullest! You shall not be able to conceive of anything that shall be more rich and full than the Grace of God. The Gospel is "that which is good." Yes, it is the best food our souls can ever eat! It gratifies, it satisfies and fills our spirits with holy joy and exhilaration!

3. Incline your ear, and come unto Me—[See Sermons #2092, Volume 35—GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL and #2316, Volume 39—TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES.] This is the gate by which salvation enters into

man—Ear-Gate—by hearing and believing. "Incline your ear," bend it forward as if you would catch every word— "and come unto Me"—

3. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Only think of a Covenant made with needy sinners, thirsty sinners! God striking hands with guilty men in the Persons of Jesus Christ. It is a sure Covenant, too—not made up of "ifs" and "buts" and "perhapses," but a Covenant sealed with blood and signed by Him who gives an oath with it that He will never turn from it, that you may have "strong consolation."

4. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people. [See Sermons #2534, Volume

43—THE GREATEST GIFT IN TIME OR ETERNITY and #2787, Volume 48—CHRIST'S TRIPLE CHARACTER.] He who is our greater David comes to us to bear witness to the Immutable Love of God and to be to us our Captain and our King! Happy are the souls that accept this David to be their Leader. You remember how David, in the

Cave Adullam, gathered to himself "everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, and he became a captain over them." Even so, the great Antitype, David's Son and David's Lord, is willing now to gather to Himself those who are spiritually bankrupt, discontented and weary with the world, and God says, "I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people."

5. Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that know You not shall run unto You because of the LORD Your God and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You. What joy this gives to you who love Him! Jehovah has glorified His Son, and given to Him the power to call to Himself a people that He knew not in a saving sense, and He shall so call nations that knew Him not that they shall run unto Him! We do not preach the Gospel at haphazard—we are sure of results. If we speak in faith, in the name of Christ, men must be saved, they must run to Christ. It is not left to their option—there is a Divine hand that secretly touches the springs of the will of men so that, when Christ calls them, they run to Him! Oh, that He would just now call them, even those that are furthest off, that they may run to Him and that He may be glorified! A Savior without souls saved by Him would be only a Savior in name. A head without a body would be a very ghastly thing. A shepherd without sheep would be a man without occupation. A Christ anointed to save the lost, and yet no lost ones coming to Him—where would His Glory be? But sinners, drawn by His Almighty Grace, run to Him, and so God glorifies Him!

6. Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. In those happy Gospel times when Christ is set forth on purpose that "He may be found," seek Him, call upon Him! He is very near when the Gospel is preached with holy unction, when Christians are praying, when hearts are breaking for the conversion of sinners, and when His Spirit is working in their hearts that they may repent of sin.

7. Let the wicked forsake his way—It is a bad way, it is a downward way, it is a way that will end in destruction! Do not follow it any longer. "Let the wicked forsake his way."—

7. And the unrighteous man his thoughts. "Thoughts!" says one, "We shall not be hanged for our thoughts!" Oh, but you may be damned for your thoughts! No man has really forsaken the way of wickedness until he hates the very thought of wickedness. If your thoughts run after evil, your tongues will soon utter evil and your hands will soon do evil.

7. And let him return—he is like one who has wandered from his father's house—"let him return." He is like the dove that flew away from Noah's ark and was ready to faint. "Let him return"—

7. Unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. [See Sermons

#1195, Volume 20—ABUNDANT PARDON and #2797, Volume 48—THE NEED AND NATURE OF CONVERSION.] What a blessed word, "abundantly," is here! Abundant pardon to cover abundant sin, abundant provocation, abundant rejection of His Word!

8. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My way, says the LORD. "Says the Lord," as if He would not leave the Prophet to speak any longer on His behalf! He Himself appears upon the scene and speaks—"For My thoughts are not your thoughts." No doubt He refers here to the pardon of sin. Our thoughts are narrow! We find it hard to forgive great offenses, to forgive many offenses, to forgive many offenders, to continue completely to forgive— all this is very difficult to man.

9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. Think of the biggest thought you ever had concerning God's forgiveness of sins. Try again. Let your thoughts rise still higher—you cannot have reached the utmost height yet, "for as the heavens are higher than the earth," so are His thoughts and ways higher than yours!

10. 11. For as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. If you believe this great promise, you shall have the full benefit of it. Let this gracious rain drop on you, and it must refresh you. Let these blessed snowflakes come down on you, and they shall melt into your bosom, and remain there to bless you forever—they shall not go back to God with their mission unfulfilled! As for us who preach that Word, or teach it in the Sunday school—we may have a full assurance that we shall not labor in vain, nor spend our strength for nothing! No, no—the raindrops go not on an errand that can fail and the snowflakes that fall to the earth accomplish the end for which they are sent! Much more shall the purpose of God's Word be accomplished! Behold, it drops like the gentle rain—like snowflakes fly the messages of mercy from the lips of the Lord, Himself, and they shall not fall in vain, blessed be His holy name!

12. For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. There shall seem to be joy everywhere when there is joy in your heart. When you receive Christ, you have put everything round about you into its true position. The whole Creation is a vast organ, and man puts his tiny fingers on the keys and evokes thunders of harmony to the praise of God! When the heart is filled with joy and peace, mountains and hills break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree. The thorn is everywhere, today, pricking our feet and maiming our hands. But "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree." Where is the thorn, then? I see it upon the bleeding brow of Christ—He has taken it away and worn it as a crown!

13. And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting

sign that shall not be cut off [See Sermons #833, Volume 14—THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL; #2410, Volume 41—SPRINGTIME IN NATURE AND GRACE and #3044, Volume 53—SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS.] It shall make

men know what He is like, what gracious power He has, what goodness dwells in Him! "It shall be to Jehovah for a

name"—"An everlasting sign." That sign is exhibited today in the eyes of men. An evil and adulterous generation called for a sign, and this is the sign that God has given—His converting Grace in His Church. Instead of miracles, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners—and if any will not believe when this sign is sent to them, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead! It stands as "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."