

An Unalterable Law

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." [Hebrews 9:22](#).

EVERYWHERE under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy—scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the Tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood- sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste— and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith! The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship. The effusion of blood was the appointed rite and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains and on the vestments of the priests was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the Law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bid to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the Book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the Law which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the Apostle refers to a literal fact when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the Law of God, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin except by blood. In one case, only, was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass-offering, referred to as an alternative in [Leviticus 5:11](#), might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons. But if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given! The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the Gospel there is no exception, not such

an isolated one as there was under the Law—no, not even for the extremely poor! Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not, any of us, to bring an offering any more than an offering to bring—but we have, all of us, to take the offering which has already been presented and to accept the Sacrifice which Christ has, of Himself, made in our place—there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come—"Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION—that is to say, the remission of sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Blood has been shed and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the Law of God, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word, remission, means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained! Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance is possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confesses his sin and forsakes it, then shall he find mercy. God has so declared it, and He will not be unfaithful to His Word. "But is there not," one asks, "a sin which is unto death?" Yes, verily, though I know not what it is, nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is. This much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense, even, than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron and, henceforth, he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yes, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin!

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to the Scriptures complete. That is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin and leave him accountable for the rest, but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed—he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred! He is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, Believer, there is no sin in God's Book against you! If you have believed, you are forgiven—forgiven not partially, but

altogether! The handwriting that was against you is blotted out, nailed to the Cross of Christ and can never be pleaded against you anymore forever! The pardon is complete!

Moreover, this is a present pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the Gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved. But we preach to you in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus! Not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease and the sin that dwells in us must be daily and hourly mortified. But as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to His Justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once! It will be given to any of you tonight who accept it—yes, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it! Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven forever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the Great White Throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the Judgment Seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God, Himself, vouchsafes, He will never revoke!

I will add to this one other remark. The man who gets this pardon may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him. But to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart! Glory be to God, the privileges of the Covenant of Grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction and assurance! Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word! God's own Word it is that says, "Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned! It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as He gives it to me. "Oh," says one, "how happy would I be if this might be my case." You have well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. "But," says another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." You reason after the manner of the sons of men! Know, then, that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and His thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err—it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man—He pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder and sing, "Who is a God like unto You, that passes by transgression, iniquity and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens! When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances. But when He forgives, He displays the riches of His Grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend!

Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue, He does in a moment put away, for He delights in mercy! And judgment is His strange work. "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto

Me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me! There is no remission except with blood—but there is remission, for the blood has been shed!

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that—

II. **THOUGH THERE IS PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD.** That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you should be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy Law. But be it known unto you that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin! If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you! Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift and is sign of Grace—but there is no atoning power in repentance! In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission! But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness is given up and temperance becomes the rule? What if licentiousness is abandoned and chastity adorns the character? What if dishonest dealing is relinquished and integrity is scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well! I would to God such reformations took place everywhere—yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into further debt—and past delinquencies are not condoned by future good behavior. So sin is not remitted by reformation! Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against Him. "What, then," says the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their humbling of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they are sincere, I would not quit, rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh, dear Hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin! I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth and if the saints in Heaven could all join—all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word! No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer, itself, can never blot out a sin without the blood! "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may!

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there are those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin—and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from bathing and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul! A strange infatuation, certainly! Yet today, in India, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvelous sufferings and distortions in the hope of getting rid of sin! To what purpose is it all? I think I hear the Lord say, "What is this to Me that you did bow your head like a bulrush, and wrapped yourself in sackcloth, and ate ashes with your bread, and mingled wormwood with your drink? You have broken My Law—these things cannot repair it! You have done injury to My honor by your sin, but where is the righteousness that reflects honor upon My name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "How shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas, it was all in vain! Here stands the sentence. Here forever must it stand—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy Him!

Observe again how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in Baptism. Ah, futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very Apostle, of whom it was said gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance in which the Believer holds fellowship with Christ in His death. It is a symbol—it is nothing more! Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the "Mass," as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin? We fling this text in their faces—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case for it is without the shedding of blood—without the blood-shedding, the blood as distinct from the flesh—without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin!

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go still deeper. Jesus Christ, Himself, cannot save us apart from His blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the Holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that He can now forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so! Not the holiness of Jesus! Not the life of Jesus! Not the death of Jesus, but the BLOOD of Jesus only, for, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the Second Coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in His Glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that it holds too much before the sinner's eyes Christ on the Throne, whereas, though Christ on the Throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the Cross, or we can never be saved! Your faith must not be placed merely in Christ Glorified, but in Christ Crucified. "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ Crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I remember one person who was united with this Church (the dear Sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ Glorified and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon Him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon from Christ Crucified! I did not know and until I had seen Him as shedding His blood and making a Propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important—"Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ Himself! It is the Sacrifice that He has offered for us that is the means of putting away our sin—this, and nothing else! Let us pass on a little further with the same Truth of God—

III. THE REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the Doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the Law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe and the Law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that! The Law of God, then, being a righteous Law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for Him not to carry out the penalty! Would you have Him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die—would you have God to be a liar? Shall He eat His words to save His creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The Law's sentence must be carried out! It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of His holiness, He must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, could He save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of Glory, takes upon Himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave Him, stands in their standing and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares His arm and He says, "Strike, O, sword, but strike Me and let My people go!" Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the Law pierced and His blood was shed, the blood not of One who was only Man, but of One who, by His being an eternal Spirit, was able to offer up Himself without spot unto God in a way which gave Infinite Efficacy to His sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered Himself without spot to God. Being in His own Nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending

all the natures of man, as it were, within Himself by reason of the majesty of His Person, He was able to offer an Atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency!

What our Lord suffered, none of us can tell. I am sure of this—I would not disparage or underestimate His physical sufferings—the tortures He endured in His body—but I am equally sure that we can, none of us, exaggerate or overvalue the sufferings of such a soul as His! They are beyond all conception! So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was He, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by His Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish! "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them—"unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ—it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust—I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the Infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, He released me, and I am clear! Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the Person of my Savior? Who shall commit me to the flames of Hell, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of Hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to His charge, answered for them, expiated them and received the token of quittance from them, in that He was raised from the dead that He might openly vindicate that justification in which, by Grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh, my dear Hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you! You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you quibble at accepting Christ! You stumble at this stumbling stone! You split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I refuse to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be Inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage—"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavored to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head! Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labor, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples, but as the Lord lives, there is no pardon for you except through this shedding of blood! Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by Him when your own remedy is revealed by Him!

He bids you take the way which He appoints, but if you reject it, you must die! Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood is on your own head. You are warned!

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission! If you have come to Christ, you are saved. If you can say from your very heart—

"My faith does lay her hand, On that dear head of Yours, When like a penitent I stand, And here confess my sin."

Then your sin is gone! Where is that young man? Where is that young woman? Where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, "We would be pardoned now"? Oh, look, look, look, look to the Crucified Savior and you are pardoned! You may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God's Atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Son, rejoice, for your transgressions are blotted out!

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this Doctrine. Let this be the front, the center, the pith and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward contentment as when I have preached the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving Doctrine—grip it and you shall have laid hold of eternal life! Reject it and you reject it to your confusion! Oh, keep to this! Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in it. True, but let it also have the Doctrine of Atonement in it. He says he could not get the Doctrine of Justification by Faith into the Wurtembergers' heads and he felt half-inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads in order to get it in! I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh, how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail—"The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up His life in pouring out His blood—it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to Him—pardon now, complete pardon, pardon forever! Look away from all other confidences and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God who has gone into the Heaven, and who lives today to plead before His Father's Throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, He poured forth for sinners! As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the Crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening near—as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have strived to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation! And if you reject it, do me this favor, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, His Gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved! But, by God's Grace, I would rather meet you there, all covered in the one Atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Savior! And then together will we sing,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by His blood to receive honor, and power, and dominion forever and ever." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 57.

A lament for the death of the righteous—many of them put to death by persecution.

Verses 1, 2. The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. They shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. When there is a storm coming on, you may see the shepherds among the hills gathering their sheep and taking them home. And when good men die in large numbers and the Church's ranks are thinned, it is sometimes a token that bad times are coming on—and so God takes away the righteous from the evil to come. Oh, did men know what the world loses when a good man dies, they would regret it far more than the death of emperors and kings who fear not God! But as for those who are made righteous by the Grace of God, they need not fear to die. To them it will be a rest—a sleep with Jesus—till the trumpet of the Resurrection—and all the evil that will come upon the world will not touch them. They shall rest till the Master comes! Now, the rest of the Chapter is a very terrible description of the sin of the people of Isaiah's day. And at last it contains a very brilliant display of the Grace of God.

3, 4. But draw near here, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the harlot Against whom do you sport yourselves? Against whom make you a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood? Because this people so exalted against God and His Gospel, God would not allow that they were the true seed of Israel at all. He makes them out to be a false, degenerate breed—and He asks them how they dare to sport against His Prophets and draw out the tongue, and make a wide mouth against those who spoke for the God of Israel.

5. Enfaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valley under the cliffs of the rocks? The Lord had said that they should offer sacrifices only on one altar at Jerusalem—and to Him alone—but they had set up altars under all the ancient oaks to worship all sorts of gods. In addition to this, they had gone so far after the cruel way of the Pagans that they offered their own children in sacrifice in the valleys, under the cliffs and the rocks.

6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is your portion: they, they are your lot; even to them have you poured a drink offering, you have offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these? They had set up the smooth stones which they had found in the brook, and made them into altars—no, made gods of them—for when man wants to make a god, anything will do, whether it is the fetish of the cannibal, or the round robin of the ritualist. It little matters which. A piece of bread will do, for a god, as well as a piece of stone. Anything will man worship, sooner than worship the great, invisible, eternal God!

7, 8. Upon a lofty and high mountain have you set your bed: even there you went up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors, also, and the posts have you set up your remembrance. Where they ought to have put up texts of Scripture and the remembrance of God's Law, they had set up memorials of their false gods everywhere, for when men become superstitious and worship falsely, they seem to be far more eager about it than those who worship the true God. They go on all fours at it, and give themselves wholly up to their superstitions.

8, 9. For you have uncovered yourself to another than Me, and are gone up. You have enlarged your bed and made you a covenant with them. You loved their bed where you saw it. And you went to the king with ointment, and did increase your perfumes and did send your messengers far off and did debase yourself even unto Hell When they were in trouble, instead of going to God, they went to the king of Egypt, that he might come and help them against the king of Assyria—but they would never turn to God! They loved idols and so they trusted in an arm of flesh. They forgot the invincible arm which had overthrown Pharaoh at the Red Sea and worked such wondrous miracles for the deliverance of His people. And they made gods of the kings of the earth and trusted in them, "and did debase yourself even unto Hell."

10. You are wearied in the greatness of your way. They did so much and they were so superstitious, that they even wearied themselves with it.

10. Yet said you not, There is no hope: you have found the life of your hand; therefore you were not grieved. So long as they did but live, they did not think that there was any hope of anything better—and so they were not grieved for all their sin and all their trouble.

11. And of whom have you been afraid or feared, that you have lied and have not remembered Me, nor laid it to your heart? Have not I held My peace even of old, and you fear Me not? This is the old trouble—that because God does not smite down sinners, then and there, they take liberties with Him. They do not know that His patience—His slackness, as they call it—is long-suffering because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And so He puts up His sword. Yet He says, "Have not I held My peace, even of old, and you fear Me not?"

12. I will declare your righteousness, and your works; for they shall not profit you. They said, "Why, we are very righteous. Have not we got a god in every corner? As for our works, we have plenty of them. Have not we temples built everywhere, and altars set up on every hill and in every valley?" "Yes," says God, "such is your righteousness. They shall not profit you."

13. When you cry, let your collection of idols deliver you: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain—Oh, what a sarcasm! But how just. You that love not God, when you are in trouble, let your sins deliver you if they can! Let your pleasures comfort you!

14. 15. And one shall say, Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him, also, who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. We dwell in time and, by-and-by, we are hurried into eternity—but God always dwells in eternity! It is a very beautiful thought that He should have two dwelling places. A blasphemer once met a humble Christian and he said, "Pray, is yours a great God or a little God?" "Well," said he, "He is so great a God that the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He condescends to make Himself so little that He can dwell in my poor humble heart." God has two temples. The one is the high and holy place—the other is the lowly and the humble place. May we have Him in our hearts—and then shall we be in His Heaven before long.

16. For I will not contend forever, neither will I always be angry. God does not like being angry, and though sin provokes Him, yet He feels not at ease when He is wrathful.

16. For the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have mad. It would destroy them. Man could not bear God's anger forever.

17-19. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry and smote him: I hid and was angry, and he went on in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him, also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips. God teaches men how to speak words of penitence, and faith, and prayer and praise.

19. Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, says the LORD; and I will heal him. He puts it twice over, because it is such a prodigy of Grace that God should heal sinners that are so polluted with sin! He puts it over again. "I will heal him."

20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "Work up" such is the word—"whose waters work up mire and dirt" continually, as it were, in a work, and bringing up its filthiness from the bottom—bringing it to the shore—taking away the brightness from every wave and the crystal blue from every drop. Its waters cast up mire and dirt.

21. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicket.