

God, the Husband of His People

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"Although I was a Husband unto them, says the Lord." [Jeremiah 31:32](#).

SIN is greatly aggravated by the mercy of God, of which the sinner has been a partaker. Sin in a child of God is peculiarly sinful. Instead of its being a trifle, as some men seem to think, it is a very solemn matter, indeed. To have had deep draughts of Divine Love and then to deeply offend against that love is no light thing. This seems to have been the crying part of Israel's sin. "Although I was a Husband unto them."

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God's ancient people, Israel, seem to have lived and passed across the page of history on purpose that they might remain forever the picture of ourselves. Whenever you read of their backsliding, of their idolatries, of their provoking of God's Spirit, you may shut the book and say, "Within my heart there is all this and my life is as like to this as in a glass, face answers to face." We must not be slow to condemn their sin, but we must always remember that there are two culprits at the bar—and that when we condemn them we also condemn ourselves!

Now, at this time, we shall first of all, spend a few minutes in considering the indictment which God brought against His people Israel—they had sinned—"although," He said, "I was a Husband unto them." Secondly, we shall have to plead guilty to the indictment for ourselves. And then, thirdly, we shall offer some suggestions of amendment that should arise out of the painful and penitent reflections of this evening. First, then, let us consider very earnestly and humbly—

I. THE INDICTMENT WHICH GOD BROUGHT AGAINST ISRAEL.

Their sin was aggravated because God was a Husband unto them. How was this? He was a Husband to them in that He set His special love upon them as a husband does upon his bride. He found them, as He says, in a desert land, in a howling wilderness. He found them, as we know, literally, in the land of Egypt, in the house of bondage where their lives were made bitter in the cruel slavery of making bricks for their tyrant masters. But He so loved them that with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He redeemed them. All His plagues He brought on Pharaoh and upon the fields of Zoan. He magnified His power, even on the tribes of Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea He glorified Himself by the destruction of all the hosts of Egypt. But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hands of Moses and Aaron. A husband, having loved his bride, and finding her in slavery, would never cease until the utmost that could be done had been done for her liberty and happiness! And God

was thus a Husband unto His people. He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you."

He was a Husband unto them, further, in that He made them and them, only, to be His special people. As the husband turns not his eyes to others, but sets his heart upon the one peculiar one, so did the Lord towards His people, Israel. And what people were like unto them—what people to whom God manifested Himself so clearly? There were other nations greater than they, but God did not send His Truth unto them, but they lived and perished in darkness. But God, in His Sovereign Grace, set His heart on Israel—Israel He loved—and Israel, alone!

He was a Husband unto them, in the next place, in that He remained faithful to them. He had taken them, as it were, for better or for worse—and worse, it was, with terrible preponderance! They grieved His Spirit and provoked Him to anger, yet He cast not away His people. Even to this day He is still a Husband unto Israel, and the day shall come when the scattered and the dispersed of Judah shall be gathered with all their brethren into their own land. And where they sat down and wept, and mourned over the desolation of their cities, they shall once again wake the harp with joy and gladness! God has been a Husband to that people in the faithfulness which He exhibited towards them.

He was their Husband, too, in this sense, that He communed with them most lovingly. There were divers appearances which the Lord made to His people by His Prophets and He did great wonders and worked many signs and miracles. Besides that, He revealed Himself in the Tabernacle and in the Temple—in the sacrifice and in the offerings. True, in not so clear a light as He has revealed Himself to us, but still, with marvelous brightness as compared with the darkness in which the whole world was lying. As a husband reveals himself in love with his spouse, so did the Lord as a Husband unto His ancient Church.

In addition to this, He took care to provide for His people, Israel, as a husband does, when with all his worldly goods he does endow her whom he has chosen. What people were like they—who ate angels' food? Yes, they ate manna to the fullest. If they needed water, the Rock furnished it to them! He brought oil out of the flinty rock when they needed it. All that they needed in the wilderness was supplied bounteously to them. Their garments grew not old, neither were their feet sore by the space of 40 years, though they passed through that howling wilderness where no supplies could be drawn! No people were ever better provided for than they, for even their luxury was sometimes at least gratified—when they asked for flesh, the quails descended and they were fattened thereon.

In addition to that, the God who had become their Husband protected them as the husband does his wife. He chased the Amalekites before them! He allowed no people to withstand them when they went forth to battle—and the Lord led the van. Though He chastened them before their enemies for their sins, yet when they returned, He made one of them to smite a thousand and to put ten thousand to flight. Marvelous were the deliver-

ances which the Lord worked for His people. Time would fail us to tell of Gideon and of Barak, of Sampson and of Jephtha and of all that the Lord, the Husband of Israel, did in the deliverance of His spouse!

Nor did He rest until He had brought His people, Israel, into that quiet and settled state which is the expectation of those who enter into the marriage relationship. Under their own vines and their own fig trees He made them to sit down and rest. He brought them to land that flowed with milk and honey, out of whose hills they could dig brass. He drove out the heathen before them, and gave them their land for an heritage, even an heritage forever for His people, Israel, and there the spouse of God might long have enjoyed her rest and her peace, had it not been that she broke her Covenant although He had been a Husband unto her.

Now, Beloved, just think, before we turn away from this, what a wonderful picture this is of how the Lord has dealt with such of us as are His believing people. Think of His love to us when He brought us out of Egypt. We remember well, some of us, the days of our bondage, for the iron entered into our soul. We can never forget those deep convictions, those terrible lashes of the Law and our own endeavors to make bricks without straw, that we might save ourselves by our works. How gloriously He brought us forth! How He made us to eat of the paschal lamb, and how the blood-mark was put upon the lintel and the two side posts! And we learned what it was for God to look upon the blood and to pass over us. And what a triumphant day that was when all our sins were drowned in the shoreless flood of the Savior's Atonement! What a shout went up from our hearts that day—louder and sweeter than even that of the daughters of Israel when they followed Miriam with their tabrets and timbrels to the dance! We did say then and in recollection of it, we will say it again, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" As for our sins, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left! Those Egyptians, whom we saw through our tears, we shall see no more forever!

From that day, how God has been pleased to prove that He is a Husband to us, by His special love to us! We never can doubt that Doctrine of His special love. I hate to see a contracted mind that will not tolerate the thought that God has a benevolence towards all His creatures. His tender mercies are over all His works, but do let us never in the thought of that forget that there is also a peculiar and special affection which He has towards His own chosen whom He brings to Christ! He loves not the world as He loves His spouse! God has no affection towards the ungodly such as He has towards those whom He has united unto Himself and made to be His, as the spouse is to her husband, in a vital, affectionate, intense, eternal union!

God has been a Husband to us certainly in that not only has He chosen us specially in His love, but also in that He has been marvelously faithful in that love. I can scarcely speak to you without feeling the tears well up in my eyes when I think of my own unfaithfulness

to Him who loved me before the earth was. Oh, which is the stranger of the two—that He should love us or that we should treat Him so unfaithfully?—

"Yet, though I have Him oft forgot,
His loving kindness changes not."

Precious Truth of God! He has been a Husband unto us. He has never thought of divorce. Is it not written that "He hates putting away"? And so He does and He has not put us away, but we are as dear to Him, now, as we were of old, and as we shall be when we stand before His face without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, also, in thinking over how God has been a Husband to us, as He was to Israel, that He has been pleased to provide for us as He did for Israel. Providentially, in temporal matters, we have been provided for. Perhaps some of you could not tell how you have been led in a very intricate pathway. There have been times when you have been on the verge of need, and periods, certainly, when you had nothing to spare. And yet, up to this moment, He that feeds the sparrows and clothes the lilies has not let you starve, and you can sing to the praise of His faithfulness that bread has been given you and your waters have been sure. But it has been specially so in spiritual things. Do you ever know what it is to be drained right out in spirituals—to come right to the very bottom—lower than the poor widow when she had but a handful of meal to make one cake and then die? Alas, some of us know what it is to be brought to extreme spiritual poverty and a sense of nothingness in ourselves that well-nigh breaks us to pieces and lowers us into the abyss of despair! But though the tide has ebbed out fearfully, there has always been enough water for every galley of Grace to float—and though the night has been very dark, there has always been light enough for the soul to find its way somehow! And though at times the tempest has howled terribly through the gloom, yet there has always been a harbor, so that we have been enabled to outride the hurricane—and so we shall yet outride all the storms we encounter until we reach the port of bliss! He has well provided for us and, therein, has He been a Husband unto us.

And equally well has He protected us. We little know how much we owe to the protection of Providence. We sometimes forget our dangers. I was amused to hear of a sailor when he was out in the Channel. You would think he was in great danger, saying, "What a dreadful thing it must be, to be on land in such an hour, with chimney-pots flying about and tiles falling off the houses. Who knows who may be killed if they are not safe at sea in such a storm!" We do not always reckon upon these immunities from danger which God gives us, or know how much they cost. Indeed, if Providence goes very smoothly with us, we do not seem to notice it at all! A father and a son, living at some distance from each other, agreed to meet half-way on a certain day. The son, after he had saluted his father, said, "I have met with a most remarkable Providence on the road! My horse fell three times, and yet I was not at all hurt." "Ah," said the father, "I have had an equally remarkable Providence! I rode

my horse all the way and he did not even stumble." We do not often notice the hand of Providence in that kind of thing as we ought to do. The preservations of our life—oh we do not know how many there are! Now and then we have a surprising one which we can observe—and we jot that down in our diary—but we have many more which are not noticed by us. And as for spiritual preservations, my Brothers and Sisters, incessantly in danger as we are from temptations from within and corruptions from within, from our circumstances, from the world, from the flesh, from the devil—God has, indeed, been a Husband to us and a wall of fire round about us, protecting us, else we had not been here among His people tonight—but we would have been numbered among the castaways who have gone back into perdition!

So I might continue, for I think we may add that last point. God has given to many of us just that settled rest which He gave to His people Israel when they came to Canaan. He has been a Husband to us and as Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, you shall find rest in the house of your husband," so have we found rest in Jesus Christ—a peace of God which passes all understanding! And we have come to a land that flows with milk and honey. We have crossed the Jordan of doubts and fears, and though we have not driven out the Canaanites of daily temptation, yet we still possess the land, for we that have believed do enter into rest.

This, then is the indictment against us, that although He has been a Husband unto us, we have not acted towards Him as such a Husband's love deserves. So we turn now to the next great thought, which is this—

II. WE HAVE TO PLEAD GUILTY TO THE INDICTMENT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I desire not to speak so much to you as to myself. And I pray of you that my voice may be accepted as your own voice to yourselves and if anything comes home to the conscience, open the door to it—let it wound you and let it grieve you—and let it awaken you to something nobler. God grant that it may.

What have been the peculiar sins that we, as Christian people, have committed against the love of God who has been as a Husband to us? Well, first, it is a very grievous offense against the marriage state when the heart of the bride wanders—when she is not sure, after all, that her husband is the man of her choice, and the man whom, above all others, she esteems. Now—I am afraid we have commonly committed such an offense against our union with God. Our thoughts have often wandered—wandered from our God. Our dearest earthly friends have sometimes tempted our hearts away. Verily I perceive that we often idolize children—but even worse—for in a certain sense it is worse that more sordid idolatry, the love of gold, the desire to be rich, has led many a soul astray from its chaste, simple, ardent affection to the God of Love. Our very books and our studies may decoy us from our God. Yes, our own ministers, whom we love, and even what we hear from them, may stand between us and God! The man that will be an idolater will make a god of anything, as the

poor Hottentots do with a bit of rag which they will call a god, and worship it! We may make a god of anything, and how quick we are to do it! Oh, our God, our God, our God! Do You condescend to make Yourself a Husband to us? Oh, can there be anything compared to You? What shall we even think of as second to You? You are fullness of joy! You are infinity of good! What fools, what madmen, what sinners of a scarlet dye are we when we let our heart even wink its eye, as it were, to anything else, much less go astray and miss the love which we ought to give to God alone! That is the first sin of which we may stand convicted—wandering in heart from God, although He has been a Husband unto us.

Our second sin, probably, is that we have been negligent in His service. It is the wife's joy to please her husband and unkindness or negligence from her becomes a grievous mischief in the household circle. Now, if God becomes a Husband unto us, what ought we to do for Him? I think He might come tonight and say, "I have something against you," and He might look us in the face and say, "I have not wearied you with sacrifice, but you have wearied Me with your sins. You have brought Me no sweet canes, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Much that we might have done for our Lord's Glory we have negligently left undone. Many and many a fair opportunity of speaking well of His great name has slipped by, unused. Brothers and Sisters, is it not so? I read once in a letter from a Brother that he had attained unto perfect sanctification for 20 years! Oh, if it were true, what would I give if I could say the same! I do not believe it, or that any one of us has for 20 minutes done all that he could for his Master, much less for 20 years! There must have been sins of omission, at least! I dare not look back upon a single sermon without feeling that I ought to have preached it better, nor ever rise from my knees in prayer without feeling that I ought to have prayed more earnestly and to have come nearer to God. Everything seems marred and spoiled. We will strive after perfection, but who among us has attained it? Have we not been negligent in the loving kindness which we ought to have manifested toward Him who has been a Husband to us?

Further than that, Brothers and Sisters, have we not been very much to blame in the slackness of our communion? The wife desires to see her husband. She says—

"There is nae luck about the house, When the gude man's aw!"

She cannot be satisfied without his presence! She says there is music in the sound of his footstep when she hears it on the stairs. She loves to meet him when he comes home from his daily labor. It is her joy to be in his company. Has it been so with us? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you have come up, sometimes, to this Tabernacle and you have listened to me, but you have not had any desire to get near to God, or if you have, it has been a very faint desire—and you have gone away without seeing Him! And day after day will pass with some professors without a word with the Master—without a single glimpse of the Savior! They seem to be content when the great good Lord, who is a Husband to them is far away. It must not be so anymore! Let us confess the sin. I fear it is so with most of us.

A further sin against God, our Husband, is this, that I fear we have often been loose in our trust in Him. It would be a sad thing if the wife did not believe her husband's word and if she could not trust her husband's heart. Now, it has been so between us and God sometimes. He cannot lie! Moreover, He has given us two immutable things wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us in the Gospel. He has never broken a promise yet—if we never doubted God till God gave us cause to doubt Him—doubting would be unknown! And yet have we not been base enough, when some new trial has come, to sit down and say, "Shall I get through this? Will the promise be fulfilled now? Will not the Lord, after all, leave His servant to perish?" Shame on us! Shame on us! Shame on us! The Lord forgive us our unbelief, and strengthen our faith!

Once more, is there not this sin very common among professors—that even the idea of this relationship of God has not crossed some professors' minds? This is a sweeping charge to bring, but the Doctrine of the Union of the Believer with Christ, and of the marriage of the Believer to Christ, is not even thought of by many professing Christians. They are Believers in Christ and they look to the precious blood, but they have not entered into that which is within the veil. They have not sought to know those choicer and deeper things. Well, but is this right, that God should be a Husband unto us, and yet that we should not recognize the relation? Married, and not know it? God, your Husband, and you never think of Him? Does this blessed fact never tone your life, nor give a color to your actions, never check your hand, nor nerve it for a holy deed? Is this all put away, as if there were nothing in it, but perhaps a pretty fancy, or a word or two that might be listened to, but might as well be forgotten? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, this is sin, indeed, and I am sure that there are few of us that are not guilty, probably none of us, for oftentimes we have forgotten this union, though we have known and understood it! We have walked towards God as if we were strangers to Him and there were no relationship by blood between us and our God through Jesus Christ!

Thus have I read the indictment, and thus would I plead guilty. Thus would I weigh, and thus would I ask each professing Christian here to weigh the charges as they come against himself, and say how far they concern him. And now to close. A few words by way of—

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT.

It is idle to be always regretting, but never reforming—to be forever confessing, but never making an advance in the right direction. Now, first, dear Brothers and Sisters—sitting here tonight while Gods' gracious rain is falling on the earth, may His rain fall on our hearts—let us admire the condescension of God that He should say, "I have been a Husband unto you." It is a depth of Grace that He who made the Heaven and the earth and who is infinitely great and glorious, should condescend to come into anything like such a relation

as this with His poor creatures whom He has made and whose breath is in their nostrils. Oh, what a stoop—from the highest loftiness of Glory—to call Himself a Husband to a worm!

Adore next, I pray you, the faithfulness with which hitherto God has carried out this relationship. I have asked you to remember it. Now, adoringly bow your hearts at the thought of it. Oh, God, we bless You, You have not left us. We praise Your name that You have continued so truly a Husband to our souls and that notwithstanding all our sin, and care, and woe!

Let us, Brothers and Sisters, from henceforth seek to love the Lord foremost. A great man, taking his wife with him to a noble entertainment that was given by Cyrus, was asked by her husband on his return what she thought of Darius, and she replied, "I never thought of Darius. I never thought of anybody but my Husband." And oh, were it not a grand thing if our hearts chiefly thought of God? Other things must, of course, come across the mind and, for a while, engross it, but the first free thought of the Believer should be of the Glorious One who loved him from before the world—and will love him when the world has passed away!

And as we set God first in our love, so, next, let us try tonight that we set Him first in all our actions. "Seek you first—first—the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Let the supreme aim of life be not business, not the family, not personal pleasure, but our God! Let all be secondary and subordinate to Him. Set Him on high in your spirit and let everything contribute to His service and Kingdom.

And that being done, let us seek to dwell with our God. This is the true and effective way of reforming. Instead of having breaks of communion, little periods of it now and then, like oases in the desert, we should seek to have constant communion with Him. What a delightful hymn that is—

"Son of my soul, You Savior dear!" We often sing it. I wish we could practice it and that it were ours always, to abide with Him, because without Him we could not live and without Him we dare not die. May we learn the art of fellowship with God in the turmoil of business. To have fellowship with God in the closet, in the study, or in the chamber is not always easy, but to have fellowship with Him in the noise of busy life is difficult—but to this we ought to attain. May we be able to attain to it, so that we may never leave the society of Christ, go where we may.

And, Brothers and Sisters, if there is anything that we have not done for Christ, anything that we could do now, tonight, anything that we feel we ought to do tomorrow, let us do it! Let us not be saying that we have left undone these things, but let us set to work to do them. The wife gives to her husband her whole self—let us give to our loving God our whole spirit, soul and body! Be it our prayer that there may not be an unconsecrated hair upon our heads, not a single heaving of the lungs, nor a circulation of the blood, but what in the

whole shall be acknowledged. We would not desire to keep even a little spot for the flesh, or make provision for the lusts thereof. Pray that God would sanctify us wholly. Oh, God, do this! And it will be best for us to turn the whole subject into an earnest, loving, longing prayer. Oh, You who are a Husband to my soul, come to me, visit me! I know I have offended You, but Your mercy is great. Reveal Yourself to me! I am cold and dead, and like a clod of earth, but Lord, You can make the clod a star, to burn as fire and shine as gloriously as the sun! Only Your Presence I want, and my sins will flee, and my weakness be swallowed up in strength. If I am unholy, Your Presence though Jesus Christ shall put my sins away. If I am dead, Your Presence would be my life! Oh come, Lord, come to me for Jesus' sake!

Now, I know that to some here all this seems like an idle tale. Well, well dear Friends, I wish it were not so! But you must be born-again and until you are born-again you will not understand this. But if you do not understand this simple talk which Believers have with one another, depend upon it, you will never be able to enter where they sing in nobler notes before the Throne of God! May God convince you of your need of a Savior and bring you to put your trust in Jesus, for there is life in Him, and in Him, alone! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 55; JEREMIAH 30:1-11.

It is the language of Infinite Mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, poor and miserable through sin and, God, instead of driving us from His Presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

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 the freeness of Divine love? See how God, who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the Water of Life and, as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely! Yes, He stands like the salesman crying in the market, and cries, "Ho! Ho! Everyone that thirsts!" But, mark, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for ourselves—for He says, "He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price." All that you need, dear Friend, God is ready to give you! Yes, He invites you to come and receive it! He presses upon you the good things of the Covenant of Grace. Why do you stand back? Do you want these good things? Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come.

2. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?

2. Hearken diligently unto Me and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy. He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it if you will but

come and have it! You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!

3. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live—Then who would not hear—who would not give attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

3. And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Will God enter into Covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will! "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

4. Behold, I have given Him—That is, the Son of David, Jesus the Christ, "I have given Him."

4. For a Witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. If you need anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the Witness to the Character of God! Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has given His Son to be such a Leader to you! Oh, who would not enlist beneath His banner?

5. Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the LORD, Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You. Here God speaks to Jesus, whom He has made a Commander, and He tells Him that He shall not be without a people, for those who never knew Him shall come to Him. There are some in this house tonight who have not yet yielded themselves to Christ—some of whom He will say, "Tonight I must abide in your house"—and when that Voice of power is heard, their hearts will yield and they will become the disciples of Jesus!

6. Seek you the LORD while He may be found. And that is tonight, for the promise of finding is still given to everyone who seeks.

6. Call you upon Him while He is near And He is near, for in all places where His name is recorded, there He has promised to be. Wherever the Gospel is preached, we have Christ's word for it—"Lo, I am with you always." So, then, call upon Him while He is near.

7-9. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. Oh, that we could rise to God's thoughts—that we could speak His thoughts of love—that we could really believe that He is ready, now, to receive and forgive us, and could, therefore, fly into His arms without hesitancy or delay! God help us to do it!

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 Trust, then, in the Gospel, which is the Word of God, for it cannot fail you! Rest yourselves in the Divine promise of pardon, for it cannot drop to the ground. It must accomplish the Divine Will!

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. "For," if you do this—if you forsake your sins—if you turn unto God—God can make such joy in the heart that all the world shall be full of joy! When a man feels that his sins are forgiven, then Nature seems replete with ditty and the hills, rocks and trees all proclaim the Presence of a gracious God! Until then, when the heart is heavy, Nature seems dull and dreary—but oh, may the Grace of God so light up our hearts that all the world may be lit up for us.

13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

JEREMIAH 30:1-11.

Verses 1, 2. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book. Too good to be lost! The Prophets said much when they did not write, but this particular Chapter and the next were to be carefully written down. God here begins to deal with His guilty people in a way of love and mercy. It is a very strange Chapter, one of the richest, one of the most cheering in the whole of God's Word! Therefore, write it in a book.

3. For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it Souls get into captivity. God has ways of restoring them. Tonight I expect, and believe, that many captives will be restored by the Grace of God to rest and comfort! Will you be one of them? Poor Mourner, pray now that you may be! Ask God that tonight He may give you freedom from your captivity.

4, 5. And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. "Why" you say, "I thought you began to read words of comfort. Now there is a drop!" Yes, there always is. Whenever God is going to comfort a man, He first makes him see his need of comfort. There is always stripping before there is clothing! On God's part there is always emptying before there is filling.

6. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Everywhere, when the time of mercy came, it was a bad time, a dark time—a time of inward throbs, throes and travail.

7. Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble: but he shall be saved out of it. But he shall be saved out of it! What a flash of lightning across the black face of the cloud. "He shall be saved out of it."

8, 9. For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. See how the Chapter has gotten back to the comforting strain again? After the bass notes, we run up the scale. We have come to comfort again! I should not wonder if we have to go back, however, for so it is—God's mercy is a checkered work, black and white, sorrow and salvation.

10, 11. Therefore fear you not, O My servant, Jacob, says the LORD, neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. What a beautiful collection of words for a troubled heart! And they are not beautiful words only, but there is a deep, true meaning in them—"Shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid." I pray God that many here who are much afraid, and cannot be quiet, but are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, may get into this blissful state tonight!

11. For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you. God may destroy the wicked, and He will—but not His people, His own beloved—His heart goes after them. "I will not make a full end of you."

11. Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure and will not leave you altogether unpunished. You will have to smart for it. If you are God's child, you will have to be brought home with many a tear and many a sigh. Your sorrow, tonight, is a part of a heavenly discipline by which you shall be saved!