

A CROWN OF GLORY AND A DIADEM OF BEAUTY

Preached at Providence Chapel, Oakham, February 24th, 1861

"In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate" Isa.28:5,6

We will endeavour, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable, to show:

I. Who the *characters* here spoken to, are; viz., "The residue of his people."

II. What *the Lord is to his people*: 1, a "crown of glory;" 2, a "diadem of beauty;" 3, " a spirit of judgment;" 4, "strength;" and, 5, the time when, "in *that day*."

I. The *characters* here spoken to are the residue of his people. Men speak of us as being a narrow-minded, contracted, and bigoted people; people that think no one is going to heaven but themselves. But are we more narrow than the Word of God allows, when here we have the word "residue," the same word in the original signifying, "remnant," the poor despised remnant? Sometimes, when you go to the draper's shop, the man shows you a remnant of cloth, or linen, or of any other kind or quality of material, at a smaller price or lower rate. "O," says he, "it is a mere remnant; you can have it for little money, as it is a small odd piece left off the whole bale." So here the people of God are represented as a small remnant; and Paul calls them a "remnant according to the election of grace." In another

place they are represented as being only like a few odd berries left on the uppermost and outer branches of a tree, and that there is but one of a city and two of a family (or tribe) that the Lord brings unto Zion. Seeing these are scriptural declarations, would it not be much the wiser way in man, instead of venting all his spleen and malice against those who are enabled faithfully and honestly to declare these things as contained in the Word of God, if they were to ask themselves whether they bore any marks as belonging to such a kind of people, and that, if there are so few for which the Lord has such a special regard, just an odd berry or two on a straggling bough, whether or not they belonged to that few? What man despises, the Lord of heaven and earth has chosen. This you see in his conduct towards the sons of men throughout the Sacred Page; and you may see it now as plainly in every city, town, village, or hamlet where the Lord has a vessel of mercy. In whatever society, they cannot stand on a level with others of their fellow mortals. This difference in time has been irrevocably fixed from all eternity. Men do not see what a sword the Word of God is; because it is in the scabbard; but when a God-taught minister gets into a pulpit to expound or open up Scripture, he either does, or should do (and woe to him if he does not), draw the sword from the scabbard, unsheathe it, and the Lord condescends to own him as an instrument in his hands. It is made sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces even to "the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But whether ministers draw the sword or not, it is there, and men will fall down under its sharp and cutting edge, either in judgment and mercy here or wrath hereafter. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

II. What *the Lord is to his people.*

1. To this despised remnant the Lord is here declared to be a "crown of glory;" not like the poor crowns made of perishing leaves of flowers, vain baubles, at a drunken feast; but a "crown of glory that fadeth not away." And who is this crown of glory? Why, it is the Lord of hosts, or God of armies.

You have a most beautiful account of this King of glory, and how he is worshipped by all the hierarchy of heaven and glorified spirits before the throne in Psalm 24. When they shouted, so as to make heaven's high arches ring, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Then the question is asked. "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is, "The LORD strong and mighty; The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The question is again asked, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer comes again, "The LORD of hosts. He is the King of glory." He crowns you with goodness, mercy, and forgiveness, and you crown him with praise; and if you had a thousand crowns you would cheerfully put them all on his blessed head, as he so richly deserves; and if you had a thousand tongues they would all speak his praise.

2. "And a diadem of beauty." He is the beauty of Israel, even beauty itself. He is beautiful in his Godhead, as equal with the Father in power and glory; he is beautiful in his complex Person as God-man Mediator, God and man in one glorious Person; he is beautiful in his covenant characters, in his finished work, in his resurrection power, in his glorious ascension, in his all-prevailing intercession, now before the throne, and in his own glorification with all the offices he bears, for the sake of and in behalf of all his dear people, though now seated at his own Father's right hand, clothed in majesty and power, there to reign and rule till all his and his

people's enemies are made his footstool; and all for the sake of a remnant, or a residue the world despises. They are a highly-favoured few; and when faith is in act and exercise, the soul can then sing, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!" And also, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." "His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely." So that this diadem is of greater glory and beauty than any Eastern tissue, however costly it might be decorated; for that would be but a poor perishing thing at the best, a thing which would afford no relief in pain or sickness, and must be parted with in death. But this diadem of beauty you must die to fully enjoy. Faith brings a measure of its enjoyment even now; for there is to be an earnest, a foretaste, a drop; but not the boundless ocean.

And now, poor, harassed, afflicted, tempest-tossed and comfortless child of God, what do you think of the drunken Ephraimites now, with their fat pastures, prize bulls, full purses, and bloated cheeks? Can you join them in their revelry, their toasts and cheers around their bottles and jingling glasses, clothed with a crown of pride, all their conversation showing that they are sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own drag? Do you envy them? I know you do not if you have tasted the wormwood and gall of a wounded conscience and are now living in the enjoyment of the pardon of sin and living in sweet anticipation of a crown of glory; and your joy will far exceed, or at least outlive, the carnal joys of the worldling, though decked out with a fulsome display of pride, which will end in smoke, darkness, confusion, disappointment, and black despair.

3. He is promised also to be "a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment." None but the children of God rightly sit

in judgment, especially upon themselves. Well; the Lord is here promised to be a spirit of judgment. A child of God may and often does sit in judgment upon himself, when the Lord at that particular time is a spirit of judgment. Satan is his unwearied foe; and to drive the quickened sinner into despair is his aim, and at a time of darkness of soul he makes that darkness greater by producing despondency. The poor soul is full of confusion, and not a mark, token, or evidence in his favour can the soul perceive. He is full of doubts, fears, and perplexity, arising from the swamps and lower grounds of the soul, through the power of sin and corruption. Then is the time for Satan to take advantage, with his temptations, to drive him to despair. The Sun's rays are hidden from sight and the afflicted soul cannot see its signs. Therefore it is in great need of wisdom from on high, to guide him in this intricate and dark path. A true spirit of judgment, at that time, he has not in himself. Here the Lord is needed, as made unto him wisdom, enabling the poor soul to "consider" in this "day of adversity." Do you not, at times, under the Word preached, feel full of confusion, like poor Job of old? At that time, however, you may be in need of a word of encouragement; you cannot take it; you cannot steal, you are made an honest soul. "Lord, 'show me a token for good,'" may be your desire. But faith and hope are low; so that you hardly believe or expect such a favour. Now, if these states of soul favours and deliverances were for believing, you would never have such favours; but salvation is all of grace. Your doubts, fears, and despondency no more prevent the Sun of Righteousness from arising upon you than the fogs from the marshes prevent the natural sun coming forth upon the face of creation. There are times when you make too much of your spiritual state as discovered to you by your frames or feelings. At other times too little, casting away all your confidence wherein you had a recompense of reward.

4. Also the Lord is promised to be "strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." In Eastern countries and in all walled towns the enemy always tried to get in at the gates, which, if they did, most probably they would slay wives and children and set the city on fire. So a child of God has often to turn the battle to the gate. There are many gates for the enemy to get in at, as John Bunyan speaks of in his *"Holy War,"* Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate; and what gates these are for the enemy to make inroads as every exercised soul knows to his sorrow: "If I had not seen this and heard that and spoken so unadvisedly at such a time, O what pain of mind I should have been spared!" The enemies within being in league with those without, it is those within that generally cause the gates without to be opened. There is the heart craving, the eye lusting, the feet walking, the hands acting. All forbidden objects!

But in turning the battle to the gate, the believer wants strength; for in himself he is weak and helpless, and there is such a dreadful power in sin that he is obliged to cry unto the Strong for strength, which is here promised; and when the Lord sees that the poor child of his has no power and that there is none shut up nor left, no secret reserve, no squinting and peeping to self, he then comes to the rescue, either by giving him strength to bear up under the temptation or delivering him by breaking the same to pieces, and so enabling the poor child to thank and praise him for coming in a time so greatly needed, though often driven to the last extremity, in order to the exaltation of his own praise, honour, and glory, in giving help and victory.

5. The time. When? "In that day." What day? Why, in the day that the Ephraimites have their crown of pride and glorious beauty. But the poor saint of God has the best of it at last. Yea, indeed, they are more than conquerors, through him

that hath loved them; and this victory being an eternal victory, never more to feel defeat.

The Ephraimite's crown perishes before night. What a state many are left to get into just as the night of death approaches after a life of ease, indulgence, extravagance, and sin, their former satisfaction now *A Crown of Glory and a Diadem of Beauty* denied them and no hope as regards the future. How solemn! And thousands are in this state, never having been enlisted under the Lord's banner, never once being engaged in the battle against self and sin, it being their former pride to glory in their shame; but it now perishes, while on the heads of the righteous the crown of glory outlasts time and is ever new and fresh; not a few withering leaves, but a crown of glory that fadeth not away; the earnest of which the Lord is pleased to bestow, as he sees good, on his own poor despised remnant in their present time state, to encourage their drooping spirits and to enable them to hope to the end for the salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. The glorious beauty of these deluded Ephraimites is not to be compared with the diadem of beauty of the poor afflicted family of God, who are made beautiful in him who is the constituted Beauty of Israel. So, my dear friends, ours is not such a hard lot as we often think it is, when, through the power of unbelief, we give way to fretfulness and peevishness and a whole mass of wretchedness that we are so often the subjects of. But let the Lord once discover himself, then does your countenance proclaim it and you feel happy as a prince. You are indeed made kings and priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and he accepts the fruit of the lips, which consists in praise and thanksgiving for his boundless grace and beauty. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." Amen.