

## **ISRAEL'S HAPPINESS**

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, March 6, 1859.

"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shall tread upon their high places."  
Deuteronomy 33:29

Moses, the man of God, in being appointed to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, had the heaviest load put upon his shoulders that mortal back could bear, and at the same time the highest honour given into his charge that human hands could receive. It was not a task that he took upon himself, unchosen, uncalled, uncommissioned. It was no flight of heroism that impelled, no outburst of patriotic ardour that urged him on to liberate his countrymen from slavery; but the express call and commission of God. It may indeed be said of him, as is said by the Apostle of Aaron his brother—"No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." (Heb. 5:4). Nor was it a matter of chance or good fortune—that infidel way of putting God out of the government of his own world—that such a man as Moses was found just at the very time when he was specially needed. It was not more of chance that Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, than it was of chance that Jacob 430 years before went down to sojourn there, or of chance that at the end of the 430 years to the very day, they came up with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. (Ex. 12:41.) God, who sees the end from the beginning, chose him for the work, and every step that He took with him was to qualify him for it.

If we view these steps with a spiritual eye, we shall see wisdom and power stamped upon them all. By a special interposition of God's providential eye and hand, Moses was preserved from a watery grave by the daughter of the very king who had determined on the extirpation of his race; by her was brought up in the court of his greatest foe; and became so enriched in her affections as not only to be made her adopted son, but as her heir, at Pharaoh's death, would have ascended the throne of Egypt. He was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, and had at his command all the luxuries that wealth could purchase, and all the honours that a prince and heir-apparent at a royal court could receive. Yet amidst all the blandishments of that luxurious life—in the full splendour of that regal city, the very ruins of which now fill travellers with astonishment and admiration, grace touched his heart, and taught him "to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Grace opened his eyes to see that God had a people here below—that the outcast Israel, the despised slaves who were building the treasure cities, and whose bands were soiled with mud and clay, were the chosen of the Almighty; and cleaving to them in faith and affection, he preferred "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Thus when Moses came to years, "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" renounced all the honours and enjoyments of an earthly court, and went forth to visit his brethren. I need not mention the cause of his being obliged to leave Egypt and flee to the land of Midian, where he tarried forty years. And O what lessons he learnt there!—lessons without which he would have been utterly unqualified to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Many a stripling hot from the university, or fresh from the academy, thinks himself fully qualified to lead the church of God. But Moses

was not' qualified, when full forty years old, by all the learning of Egypt to lead the children of Israel. He had to go for forty years into the wilderness, not merely to learn by painful experience the external hardships to be afterwards met with there, but the temptations and trials, the perils and sufferings of a wilderness heart, where there are fiery serpents that bite more venomously, and angry scorpions that sting more sharply, than any serpent or any scorpion that drags its slimy trail across the barren sand. There he learnt the terrors of God in that law of which he was afterwards the typical Mediator, and there he learnt, too, the blessings of the gospel, when he saw by the eye of faith an incarnate God in the burning bush, and became "the friend of God" by the manifestation of everlasting love to his soul.

Time will not permit me to enter further into the character of Moses. We find him, then, here in the book of Deuteronomy, at the end of the forty years sojourn in the wilderness, matured not only in years, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season, but ripened also in grace. Under the special inspiration and influence of the Holy Ghost, causing His doctrine to drop as the rain and His speech to distil as the dew, He poured forth His soul in that sweet language which animates every chapter and almost every word of this blessed book what we may call this Old Testament Gospel, the book of Deuteronomy. If blessed with any measure of his faith, what a view we shall have in our text of the special privileges and rich favours that belong to the church of God!

For us, then, so far as we belong to the spiritual Israel, Moses stood upon Pisgah's top and viewed the land spread before his eyes; for us he looked down upon the tents of Israel spread at his feet, and inspired of the Holy Ghost to view in Israel after the flesh Israel after the Spirit, he saw by faith the mystical body of Jesus the Bride of the Lamb—the

Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Viewing, then, by faith, the privileges and mercies vouchsafed to the Church of God, he burst forth in the words of our text—"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars under thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

We may observe, I think, four things in our text:

I.—**First**, the admiring **declaration**—"Happy art thou, O Israel."

II.—**Secondly**, the universal **challenge**—"who is like unto thee?"

III.—**Thirdly**, the distinctive **reasons** why such a challenge is given:

1. That Israel is "**a people saved by the Lord.**"

2. That he is "**the shield of her help.**"—And

3. "**The sword of her excellency.**"

IV.—**Fourthly**, the gracious **promises** which belong to Israel as being so highly favoured:

1. "**Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee:**" and

2. "**Thou shalt tread upon their high places.**"

I.—As the whole of our text hinges upon the true meaning of the word "Israel," we must first clearly settle its right interpretation.

1. The term "Israel," as I have already hinted, has a spiritual meaning. Moses did not mean by the word Israel after the flesh—the literal Israel whose tents filled the plain; for as the Apostle says—"They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." (Rom. 9:6, 7)

We may view, therefore, the word "Israel" in our text as the distinctive appellation of the **manifested** people of God. For God has a people not yet manifested—a people still buried in the womb of time, but included amongst the members of Christ's mystical body; for in God's book, "his members were written when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. 139:16.) Thus I take the word "Israel" in our text to mean not so much the Church of Christ viewed in all its glorious fulness as the universal assemblage of the elect of God, as His manifested people by a work of grace upon their hearts. I think we shall easily find testimonies in the Scriptures to prove the truth of this assertion. I will limit myself to three.

i. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. 2:28, 29.) There Paul points out the true Israelite, who, by a work of grace upon his soul, is made a Jew inwardly, and as such receives that circumcision of the heart whereby he becomes a spiritual and acceptable worshipper of God.

ii. What said the blessed Lord of Nathaniel? "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." (John 1:47.) There the Lord puts His broad stamp upon what Israel is as the manifested people of God "without guile." How well this testimony agrees with the blessing pronounced upon the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered—"in whose spirit there is no guile!" (Ps. 32:2.)

iii. Take a third testimony:—"We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3:3.) Circumcision, we know, was the outward badge of Israel after the flesh; but the Apostle tells us what is the true circumcision, and that it consists in three gracious marks. Can you find these three marks stamped by the hand of God upon your soul?

a. Do you ever worship God in the Spirit? Do you know, do you see, do you feel, by a ray of inward light and by a movement of inward life, that God is a Spirit? And approaching Him as such, do you offer a spiritual sacrifice when you draw near to the throne of grace? Are you spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the meaning of those words—"The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered?" Have those words of the Lord been impressed upon your conscience by His own power—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth?" Can you look into your heart and find that there is—I will not say always, but at times, in favoured moments—a spiritual worship there? Then you have one mark of belonging to the true circumcision of being one of that Israel upon whom such blessings are pronounced.

b. Can you find another gracious mark stamped upon your heart as laid down in this searching passage? Do you "rejoice

in Christ Jesus?" Have you ever rejoiced in Him as of God made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; or have you come to this point in your own soul, that there is not anything else to rejoice in? Is He more to you than husband, wife, child, house, or land? Was He ever made dear and near to your heart by any gracious discovery of His beauty and blessedness, suitability and all-sufficiency? Did you ever see Him by the eye of faith, taste His presence, feel His love, and delight in Him as the "chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely?" Then you have the second mark of being a true Israelite.

c. Have you the third, in "having no confidence"—not so much as a grain of it—"in the flesh?" Have you seen the real character of your own righteousness, that it is "filthy rags," and of the law, how broad it is, so that from a deep and daily experience of your own sinfulness and weakness, you have come to the solemn conclusion, that "in you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing." and thus have been taught and brought to have no confidence in the flesh? Its wickedness, treachery, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy have been so opened up to you, that you are more afraid of yourself than of anybody else, and are thoroughly convinced that all religion which stands in the flesh is a bed too short and a covering too narrow.

If you can find these three marks stamped upon your soul by the hand of God, you belong to the "Israel" of whom our text speaks. These vital matters should be cleared up in a man's conscience. How can he, with any degree of faith and hope, take hold of the promises that are made to Israel unless he has some evidence in his conscience that he is one of that favoured people? Here is the grand delusion of our day, that some from ignorance, some from self-righteousness, some

from hypocrisy, and some from presumption, claim the promises as their own, without any testimony from God, or any internal mark of His grace being in their hearts. The Lord keep us from walking on such perilous ground and treading such dangerous paths!

2. Having seen who "Israel" is as the grand subject of our text, we shall now perhaps be better prepared, with God's blessing, to enter into the peculiar happiness ascribed to him by the man of God "**Happy** art thou, O Israel!" What are the sources of Israel's happiness? Are they such as the world accounts to be streams of perennial joy? No. The Lord for the most part dries up or embitters the streams of earthly happiness, that Israel may not drink at them, and so forsake or neglect the fountain of living waters. When the children of Israel came to the waters of Marah, they could not drink of them, for they were bitter. After being three days without water, fain would they have quenched their thirst at them; but even the dry tongue and parched throat shrank from the bitter draught. So the Lord, for His own gracious purposes, usually puts gall and wormwood into the streams of earthly happiness. Look at some of these springs of earthly joy, you that have longed or are longing for some sips and tastes of worldly happiness, and see whether they have not been made for you bitter at the fountain head.

i. Is not **health** a primary element of earthly happiness? Let the Lord give you what He may of earthly good, if He withhold that indispensable foundation of daily, hourly happiness, does not the absence of that embitter all the rest? I know from painful experience that there are few things which more embitter all earthly happiness than a continued state of ill-health. Much of the very pleasure of living—for there is a charm in existence itself—is derived from that buoyancy of spirit, that gush of strength and vigour, that



overflowing delight in air and exercise, that sallying forth into the pure breath of heaven which gives purity to the blood and colour to the cheek—all of which are denied to the pale and sickly invalid to whom life itself is often a burden that he would gladly lay down. My own observation for many years has brought before me many of the Lord's dear family, some of them friends of my own, as thus afflicted; and could we look through the walls of houses as we pass from place to place, we might see many of the choicest saints of God at this moment lying on beds of languishing and pain. Israel's happiness does not, then, spring from the enjoyment of bodily health, though those who possess it may well be grateful to the Lord for this greatest of all earthly favours.

ii. Nor can we grovel so low as to fix Israel's happiness in that almost universal object of men's desire—**wealth** and riches, and an ample supply of all those comforts and luxuries which money can purchase. The great bulk of the Lord's people are very poor as regards earthly possessions. We are expressly told that God "hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith;" and even where the Lord has seen fit to bestow upon any of His people a larger measure of earthly goods, He generally takes care to put a heavy weight into the opposite scale. Let not the poor then harshly judge, or think lightly of those of their spiritual brethren who are more highly favoured than themselves with this world's goods.

The apostle says to his beloved Timothy—"Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." (1 Tim. 6:17.) From this we clearly gather that there are rich as well as poor in the Church of God. Indeed, how for the most part could the cause of God be carried on, unless there were those who had means to support it; or how could the poor themselves obtain aid, if all in the living family were at one

level of poverty and want? But I have observed this, for I have known, since I became acquainted with the saints of God, those who have been possessed of a good measure of earthly goods, and yet not been destitute of grace, that either they have been much tried in mind, or have been afflicted in body or family, so as to carry a heavy load upon their back, if their soul has been kept alive, or else they have been much sunk in doubt and fear, or kept in so low and barren a state as to have little to say of the goodness and love of God as personally experienced. Surely Israel's happiness is too pure, too holy, too heavenly, to be derived from a source so earthly and polluted as that golden stream which God in His providence, pours out at the feet of some of His greatest enemies, and in which too many even of those who profess His name are drowned in destruction and perdition.

iii. Nor can we put so low an estimate upon Israel's happiness, as to make it flow from those **family relationships** and social ties which bind heart to heart in such tender bonds. Yet who can say that our families, our domestic ties, are not in a certain measure streams of earthly happiness that the Lord has given us whilst we sojourn here below in this wilderness state? Surely they are; and none but those who are destitute of natural affection, or so shut up in selfishness that their heart cannot expand itself to wife or child, brother or friend, will deny it. But sin has embittered these streams. Even the pure cup of wedded love, the source of all the rest, which was presented by the Lord's own hands to Adam in Paradise had gall and wormwood dropped into it when he sinned and fell; and thus though they still flow, yet these streams of earthly happiness are often, in the providence of God, made to run in so scanty and crooked a channel, or are so much dried up, or muddled by

sin and sorrow, that though still drunk, they minister at best but a mingled draught.

I cannot dwell any longer upon this negative side. Let one word suffice. Israel's happiness arises from, centres in nothing below the skies—nothing short of God and heaven. Here, then, is the solution of the question. "Happy art thou, O Israel." Why art thou happy? Happy because God has chosen thee unto salvation in the Person of His dear Son; happy because He has loved thee with an everlasting love, and sometimes enables thee to love Him in return; happy because He has called thee by His grace, that He may one day crown thee with everlasting glory; happy because mansions of eternal bliss are reserved for thee in the skies, far beyond all the storms and waves of this troublous world; happy because the Lord is thine everlasting portion—because God is thy Father and friend, Jesus thy Redeemer, husband, and elder brother, and the Holy Ghost thy Comforter, teacher, and sanctifier. Then "Happy art thou O Israel."

Hard may be your lot here below, ye suffering saints of the Most High, as regards external matters; painful may be the exercises through which you almost daily pass through the rebellion and desperate wickedness of your carnal mind; grievous temptations may be your continual portion; many a pricking thorn and sharp briar may lie in your path; and so rough and rugged may be the road, that at times you may feel yourself of all men to be the most miserable; and so indeed you would be but for the grace of God in your heart now, and the glory prepared for you beyond the grave. Yet with it all, were your afflictions and sorrows a thousand times heavier, well may it be said of you—"Happy, thrice happy, art thou, O Israel!"

Whom upon earth need you envy if you have the grace of God in your heart? With whom would you change, if ever the love of God has visited your soul? Look around you: fix your eyes upon the man or woman who seems surrounded with the greatest amount of earthly happiness, and then ask your own conscience—"Would I change with thee, thou butterfly of fashion, or with thee, thou gilded dragon-fly, that merely livest thy little day, sunning thyself for a few hours beneath the summer sun, and then sinking into the dark and dismal pool which awaits thee at evening-tide?" Then with all your cares at home and abroad—with all your woes and trials, sunk under which you feel yourself at times one of the most miserable beings that can crawl along in this vale of tears, would you change with anybody, however healthy, or rich, or favoured with the largest amount of family prosperity, if at the same time destitute of the grace of God? Then let reason or unbelief say what they may, shall we not repeat in your ears again and again "Happy art thou, O Israel?" And O that we might be even now enabled to realise this blessing, and instead of poring over our sins and sorrows, our temptations and trials, might feel springing up in our own bosom the happiness here spoken of as Israel's peculiar portion.

II.—I pass on **to the challenge**. What a bold challenge the man of God gives! How he stands, as it were, upon Pisgah's top and looks around upon all the nations of the earth; and then, having taken a survey of that wide expanse from pole to pole, he cast his eye downward upon Israel's tents in all their lowly humility, and cries aloud in the triumphant language of faith, "Who is like unto thee?" It is a challenge, and a noble one; and the answer must be—"No; there is none like unto thee, Church of the living God."

But how is it that there is none like unto Israel? Is there not one among the nations of the earth worthy of comparison

with the Israel of God? Do not the children of men in almost every point outshine the children of God? Is Israel as rich as they? Is Israel as learned as they? Is Israel as courted, admired, respected as they? Is Israel as favoured with rank, power, and every source of earthly happiness as they? No. But that is not the meaning of the challenge. Moses' eyes were anointed with heavenly eye-salve. He looked through the mists and fogs of time into the serene regions of eternity. He was not comparing the multitudes of Israel that lay spread in the valley with the mighty nations around in all their plentitude of wealth and power. He spake as the man of God, whose thoughts, views, faith, and feelings were divine, and was therefore lifted up by them beyond the vanities of time. He spake as one who had been on the mount with God, and whose face had shone with the reflected glory of His presence. Viewing, then, Israel as the people of that God whose glory he had seen, he cried aloud in the language of faith—"Who is like unto thee?" No one.

1. Who is like unto thee in the **distinguishing favour** that God has from all eternity had in His bosom toward thee? Couldst thou by any of thine own exertions, or by any of thine own merits have drawn to thyself the special favour of a God so great, so glorious, and so holy? No; thou couldst not have done it. But He loved thee because He would love thee, and He had favour unto thee because He would have favour unto thee. Is not this His own language—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9:15) and again, "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you." (Deut. 7:7.) Who, then, is like unto thee? None but those whose names are written in the same book of

life as being loved with the same love, and who are travelling the same path to the same happy home.

2. Who is like unto thee in **being redeemed** with such a costly price as the precious blood of God's only begotten Son? Where is any redemption like thy redemption? What is the blood of bullocks and of goats compared with the blood of the Son of God?

Where is there any **righteousness** like thy righteousness? What is the righteousness of any human being, however godly or upright? I might add, of all the holy angels in heaven compared with the obedience, the meritorious obedience, of the spotless Lamb of God? Who then is washed in blood such as thou art washed in? Who is clothed with a robe such as thou art clothed in? Who is like unto thee?

To bring this more vividly before your eyes, let me call up one of the Lord's striking parables.

Fancy yourself standing in the streets of Jerusalem, and looking into the banqueting-hall of the rich man of whom the Lord speaks in the parable. Might you not say—"Who is like unto thee, thou man of wealth and substance? Who wears garments so deeply dyed in royal purple? Who is clothed in linen so white and so fine? Who has his table spread with dainties so delicate? Who has rosy wine to flow in the cup in such abundance and of such flavour? Who is like unto thee, thou rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day?" And then you might have turned and seen another sight—a beggar at his gate—and you might have said—"Who is like unto thee, O Lazarus? Thou hast not a friend to put a rag to thy leprous back. Thou has not wife, child, or relative to bring plaster or poultice for thy ulcerous sores, and has to thank the very dogs for licking the gory

matter off thy bleeding face. Thou hast no one to feed thee even with a piece of bread, and art glad to hold out thy hand to catch the crumbs as they fall from the rich man's table. Who is like unto thee, Dives, in all thy wealth and luxury? who to thee, Lazarus, in all thy poverty and leprosy?" Let a few years pass; now look into the abyss beneath: what dost thou see there? The rich man in misery, crying in torments for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Who is like unto thee, Dives, now, in the depths of hell, thy tongue parched with flame and thirst, and an impassable gulf between thee and Abraham's bosom? Turn away thine eyes from this fearful sight, and look up into the courts of bliss. Who is like unto thee now, poor beggar, whose sores the dogs once licked—who hadst not a friend on earth, and wert thrust into thy last resting-place by the cold hand of grudging charity? Thou art in Abraham's bosom, enjoying the smiles of God, basking in the beams of the Sun of righteousness throughout an endless day?

All this we see by the eye of faith. But how does the world look upon Dives? It says, "O thou great and noble Dives, who is like unto thee? I kiss thy feet; I admire thy wealth and luxury; I worship thy rank; I bow to thy fashion. Thou art rich, respectable, noble. I cannot but envy thee, for thou hast all my heart is longing after. But what doest thou here, thou poor leprous beggar—a nuisance under the very nose of the honourable Dives? Take away out of his noble sight thy rags and thy sores. Thou spoilest his appetite, and remindest him of death and the grave." Is not this the language of the world; still admiring those whom God abhors, and hating those whom God loves?

Look beyond the ways and thoughts of men to the ways and thoughts of the Lord. Let a few years pass; now view the scene with a spiritual eye. Where are all the butterflies gone?

They are all passed away; for "the world passeth away and the lusts thereof:" darkness has covered them all, and down they have sunk into the chambers of death. But where now are the lepers and beggars, the martyrs, the sufferers, the mourners in Zion, the poor afflicted ones, who loved Jesus, and whom Jesus loved? In the bosom of their God. Then may we not say of, and to every believer in Jesus, however poor or despised, "Who is like unto thee?" Which would you rather be—a poor, despised, persecuted, afflicted child of God, or enjoy all the pleasures and honours that the world could pour into your bosom? But what a mercy it is that the Lord did not make it a matter of your natural choice, but with His own hand put you amongst His people, and not only wrote your name in the book of life, but has given you even now a name and a place among His believing sons and daughters. "Who is like unto thee?"

Well then may we say—"Lord, with all Israel's faults, failings, short-comings, back-slidings, infirmities, miseries and woes, we re-echo Thy words and say 'No; there is none like unto Israel.' With them be my portion in life, in death; may I live whilst here below in sweet communion with Thyself and with them, and may I rise after death to be with Thee and them in Thy presence for ever."

III.—Moses, gives three **distinctive reasons** why none is like unto Israel.

1. The first is a reason indeed. It clears up the whole mystery at once. It does indeed show that none can be like unto Israel—"O **people saved by the LORD!**" Can you fathom the depths of these words? I cannot. I may attempt to gather up a few crumbs from this feast of fat things: I may attempt to dip my cup into this ever-flowing, overflowing crystal stream to bring out a few drops; but it is a pure river of



mercy, love; and grace that has neither bottom, bank, nor shore. "O people saved by the LORD." To understand these words, even in a feeble measure, we must look at the three Persons in the glorious Godhead, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and see how they are all interested in the expression. Israel is a people saved by each of the three Persons of the glorious Godhead.

i. She is saved **by God the Father**, —by His own eternal purpose, His fixed decree, His unalterable word and oath. He has decreed to save Israel. Can that decree be altered? God would cease to be God if He could waver or falter in His eternal purposes. If He could forfeit His work. He would no longer be Jehovah. Then who is like unto Israel, if she be a people saved by God the Father—not **to be** saved, but saved already, in His own eternal mind? so that the salvation of every member of the mystical body of Christ is as complete now as it will be in eternity to come. "Who hath saved us and called us." (2 Tim. 1:9.) How then can one member of Christ's mystical body be lost? How can the feeblest joint be cut off from the Head and die? if Israel is a people saved by the Lord; if God the Father has already saved her in His own eternal mind by fixed decree, who is to separate Israel from her God?

How sure then the salvation of all the elect race! Their being saved by the Lord determines the point without fear of contradiction. O how many have tried to save themselves! How many now, at this present moment, are fleeing, some to a broken law, that can only accuse and condemn; some to their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags; some to their own resolutions, which are but spiders webs; and some to hopes of amendment, which will all prove to be a lie. Look at Israel how distinct she stands from all these; she is saved by the Lord. Therefore she wants no other salvation. **That** is

complete. And being saved by the Lord, her salvation is indefeasible and indestructible.

ii. Look at her salvation **as accomplished by God the Son.**

The Son of God became incarnate. The Son of God took our nature into union with His own divine Person, and in that nature suffered, bled, agonized, and died. By His obedience to the Law, He wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and by shedding His blood upon the cross offered an availing sacrifice. Look at Israel and ask the question again—"Who is like unto thee, saved by the Lord?" What! Has God the Son justified thee by His meritorious righteousness, and washed thee in the fountain, which He opened for thee in His own precious blood on Calvary's tree? Has God the Son groaned, and sweat, and bled, and suffered, and died for thy personal redemption in that body which the Father prepared for Him, and which He took as an act of voluntary and acceptable obedience? Then "who is like unto thee?" And if thou, who hast fled for refuge to the hope set before thee, ever hast had an evidence in thine own conscience that God the Son suffered for thee personally, individually, in the garden and upon the cross, who is like unto thee? Whom needest thou envy? With whom wouldst thou wish to exchange? Wouldst thou, like Esau, sell thine inheritance for a mess of pottage? Wouldst thou give up thy hope of eternal life for any consideration, or part with it at any price?

iii. Then there is being saved **by God the Holy Ghost**—by His personal work upon the heart, by His sanctifying influence upon the soul, by His manifestation of salvation to the conscience, and by the setting up of the kingdom of God with His own divine power in the inmost affections.

Look then once more at the words—"Who is like unto thee?" If God the Father has saved thee by fixed decree—God the Son by meritorious obedience—and God the Spirit by personal manifestation. "Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the LORD?" If in any measure blessed with faith to look unto and believe in a salvation like this, do we, can we, want to save ourselves? Do we want anything which the creature can perform to be added to this blessed salvation from the Triune God? Our mercy is to believe it, our blessedness to know it, our happiness to enjoy it. If your soul has ever tasted that precious salvation, you want no other—it is so complete, it brings such glory to God; it is so suitable to the wants and woes of man that all other is but misery and ruin.

2. There is another reason why Israel stands alone and is not numbered with the nations: "**the shield of thy help.**" Is this wanted also? Have we not had enough in the words "O people, saved by the LORD?" Have we not exhausted in that one sentence the whole of God's grace? No; we have something still to add. Israel, in passing through this world, is not without her foes. She wants, therefore, a shield to guard her in the day of battle, and against the innumerable foes who thirst for her destruction. Look at some of them.

i. There are the **curses of a fiery Law.** The law is revealed against all sin and all unrighteousness, and speaks in words of thunder against every transgressor: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die; Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Though saved in the purposes of God, yet, as guilty of actual transgression, the Church is exposed to that fiery law, and under its terrible threatenings her guilty conscience sinks. She wants then a shield. Who is this shield? An incarnate God. How did He become the shield? By receiving

into His holy body and soul the curse of the law, and thus drinking up the wrath of God revealed in that fiery dispensation. Thus as a shield in ancient times protected the warrior's breast, so the incarnate God, by receiving the arrows of the law into His holy body and soul, became the Church's shield; and not a single dart can slay her, for He stands between.

ii. Then there is **conscience**, for, strange to say, we want a shield against our very selves. Has conscience no arrows? Do you never want a shield against the spears of your own guilty conscience? Why that has been the sharpest conflict that your soul has ever been engaged in. What are accusations without to accusations within? it is what your conscience testifies against you that makes you doubt and fear. If you had but conscience on your side, you could fight to some purpose; but O, a guilty conscience! how it takes up arms against you, and, like the avenger of blood, pursues you up to the very throne of God. O, if you could have your conscience purged from guilt by the application of atoning blood, you would feel as happy as the day is long. Now Jesus must be your shield against the accusations of a guilty conscience; for His atoning blood alone can pacify it, and speak peace and pardon to a troubled heart.

iii. There is **Satan**. You want a shield against the fiery darts of the wicked. What shield shall that be? An incarnate God, to interpose Himself between those fiery darts and your trembling soul. As the Lord rebuked Satan when he stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him and gave charge to take away the filthy garments from him, so does the blessed Jesus still rebuke the evil one, nor will He suffer him to accuse the saints of their filthy garments, for He clothes them with change of raiment. Thus. Jesus becomes the shield of the soul against a fiery law, a guilty conscience, and an

accusing devil, not to speak of a thousand minor foes over whom He makes it more than conqueror.

3. **"Who is the sword also of thy excellency."** What! a sword as well as a shield? Yes. What would the ancient warrior have done unless he had had a sword wherewith to fight as well as a shield wherewith to defend himself? The shield would not do Without the sword, nor the sword without the shield: the shield to defend—the sword to attack; the shield to guard against the hostile thrust—the sword to cut the enemy down. What! have we enemies then? Yes, many. Shall we, then, take up the sword? Yes, if it be a right one—not the sword of the flesh. Peter had enough of that when he cut off the ear of Malchus. Take not Peter's sword: the sword of the Spirit be ours. And the Lord especially—who is "the sword of thy excellency—let Him fight your battles. All we have to do is to be still in the matter. Let the Lord fight. Yet we may in some sense fight too. As the Psalmist says—"Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."

I hope the Lord has made me a swordsman. I should not stand here to any purpose unless He had put a sword into my hand, and that not a sheathed one. The sword in the scabbard would never reach your conscience. I must draw the sword and thrust it into your conscience up to the very hilt, if you are to feel its keen point and edge. Your hard hearts would never feel a blow of the sword in the scabbard. It might bruise your flesh, but it would not "pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." But the Lord must be "the sword of my excellency." I must not stand here with carnal weapons, with logic or learning, with human arguments and passionate appeals. I must stand with the sword of the Spirit in my hand, with the fear of God in my heart, and with the strength of Christ in my

arm. Thee it does execution. O what power there is in the word of God when the Lord speaks in and by it—when the Word incarnate speaks by the word written. Then, and then alone is real execution done.

Upon what? Your lusts, those internal enemies—yourself, your greatest foe; your pride and self-righteousness; your unbelief and infidelity; your worldly-mindedness, and all those evils of our fallen nature that are ever fighting for the mastery. Against them, whether in myself or others, let me ever take the sword. I have had many enemies from without—from the world and from the church—from profane and professor. I expect to have them to my dying day. But I hope the Lord has kept me from using against them the sword of the tongue or pen, nor as a minister do I ever wish to use carnal weapons, though frequently called upon to fight the Lord's battles. Let my weapons be faith and prayer, and the word of God. O that the Lord may ever be the shield of my help and the sword of my excellency, and then I shall be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and fight his battles to some purpose. Be not, however, surprised if the sword of the Spirit sometimes pierces you to the very quick. The conscience sometimes needs to be pierced. You may have inward gatherings of pride and self-righteousness, of which the blood and matter need to be let out; you may have sluggish and indolent turnouts of long-standing that want to be opened; you may have a swelling, puffed up heart that requires lancing; you may have festering sores which will not kindly heal unless the point of the sword reach down to the very bottom of the wound. Therefore, if I do use the sword sometimes, and do not merely brandish it over your head but thrust it into your conscience, I do it not to kill you but to cure you. Nothing is really slain thereby but the Lord's enemies and yours; and you know God's own words

concerning Himself. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up."

IV. I pass on to our **fourth** and last point, which contains two sweet promises.

1. The first is,—"**Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee.**" I have been speaking of enemies. I have thought sometimes that the people of God dwell too much upon their outward, and too little upon their inward enemies. The less you think of your outward, and the more you think of your inward opponents, the better it will be for your soul. Turn your eyes away from outward foes. However numerous, however formidable they may appear, they will never do you any real harm.

i. Keep a watchful eye upon **every inward foe; and if** you fight, fight against the enemy that lurks and works in your own breast. I may almost say to you, in the language of the King of Syria—"Fight not with small or great, only with thyself." I have ever found myself to be my greatest enemy. I never had a foe that troubled me so much as my own heart; nor has any one ever wrought me half the mischief or given me half the plague that I have felt and known within; and it is a daily sense of this which makes me dread myself more than anybody that walks upon the face of the earth. But God has promised that our enemies shall be found liars unto us. You may have had your external enemies, who may have prophesied your downfall. When I have been laid aside by illness, enemies have rejoiced in the hope that my mouth was stopped, and expressed their kind wishes that it might never be opened again. But I have been raised up again, nor is my mouth stopped yet. It is still my privilege here and elsewhere to preach His truth and proclaim His great and glorious name. I have no unkind feeling against a single foe,

and I hope that they may be proved not to be the Lord's enemies, though they may be mine. You, too, may have had enemies, who may have said of you—"Ah, he is nothing but a hypocrite: you may depend upon it that he has not the root of the matter in him: he will sink and fall as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow." Have they yet seen you sink and fall? You may live to see them fall, when grace makes you to stand.

ii. **Satan**, too, has been a cruel foe, and as such has doubtless presented many gloomy prospects before your eyes, and been to you a prophet of evil—not of good. He shall also be found a liar, if indeed you are one of God's Israel. You shall not die, as he has sometimes told you, in the dark, nor in despair, nor be sent to hell with all your sins upon your head.' This enemy to your soul shall be found a liar.

iii. Even the accusations of **your own** guilty **conscience** shall all eventually be found liars. God will prove Himself to be true, if every one else is proved to be false. What a mercy to have God upon our side! Whom, then, need we fear—what need we fear? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But I may add, if God be against us, who can be for us? If God be for you, not all the powers of hell can keep you out of heaven. If God be against you, not all the angels, were it their will, could pull you in. Remember, I am assuming an impossibility, for devils could not, and angels would not defeat the purposes of the one great and glorious Sovereign of heaven and earth.

2. Now a few words upon the second promise. "**And thou shalt tread upon their high places.**" Your enemies now may be very high and you very low; and it may seem at times to you that they will always be up and you always



down. Presumption may seem to carry the day for a time; your enemies may succeed for a moment. But the time will come when the humble child of God will "tread upon their high places." Remember the step that is to tread them down—not the step of pride, "but the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy." **Isa 26:6** The time will come, if you are one of God's Israel, when however high the enemies of your soul may have raised their fortifications, you shall tread them down, not with the foot of revenge, but of humility.

May the Lord be pleased to raise up in your souls who fear His great name, a sweet and blessed evidence that all these mercies and promises are yours, that you may have the comfort, and He may have the glory!