

## Plenteous Redemption

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 25, 1847

"Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." Psalm 130:7, 8

There is one feature in the experience of David which I never remember to have seen noticed—his sympathy with the suffering church of God as connected with, and flowing out of, his own trials and exercises. I will endeavour to explain my meaning more fully and clearly, and perhaps I cannot better succeed in so doing, than by contrasting our experience in this matter with David's. When we are tried and exercised, it is usually altogether concerning *ourselves*. We do not often look beyond self; we want the remedy to be of a personal nature. I do not mean to say that we are not often exercised about others. That is not my meaning. But at those times and seasons when we are most exercised about ourselves, we are least exercised about others. Self at such times is usually too much absorbed to look beyond its own narrow horizon. But it does not seem to have been so with the Psalmist. Though he was exercised, far more deeply exercised than you or I have been or probably ever shall be, he was not so lost and absorbed in self, as to have no sympathy for the suffering church of God. I will illustrate my meaning by referring to two or three instances.

In Psalm 51, we find David lamenting and bewailing before the Lord his awful transgressions, and crying out, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." (ver. 4.) How piteously he pleads! "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter

than snow." (ver. 7.) But towards the end of the Psalm, he stretches forth his sympathy towards, and desire after the suffering church of God: "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build then the walls of Jerusalem." (ver. 18.)

So also, in Psalm 69, he says, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (ver. 1, 2.) And yet, though sinking in these deep waters, he does not forget the church of God. "For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah; that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servant shall inherit it; and they that love his name shall dwell therein." (ver. 35, 36.)

So in the Psalm before us. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." (ver. 1, 2.) But, though wading in those depths, and crying for deliverance, still he does not forget the church of God: "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

Three points seem to strike my mind as most prominent in the words before us. *First, a divine exhortation;* "Let Israel hope in the Lord." *Secondly, a spiritual reason;* "For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." *And lastly, a gracious promise;* "And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

I.—But what are we to understand by "*Israel?*" In order to lay a solid foundation for a spiritual superstructure; not to stumble at the very threshold, nor slip at the very outset, we must, first, decide who is meant by "Israel." And to settle

this point, we must interpret the Old Testament by the New, for in *that* the mind of the Spirit is more clearly revealed. The Apostle Paul tells us then, "They are not *all* Israel which are of Israel;" (Rom. 9:6;) whereby he gives us clearly to understand that the literal Israel was but a type and figure of "the Israel of God," the election of grace, redeemed by precious blood.

But we must go a step farther than this, and show, that by "Israel" is meant not merely the elect, but the quickened elect. Does not the Apostle say, "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and *upon the Israel of God.*" (Gal. 6:16.) What was this rule? That "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature;*" clearly pointing out that "Israel" is not only the chosen of God, but "a new creature," begotten from on high.

But again. As strongly distinguishing the spiritual from the carnal Israel, he says, Rom. 2:28, "For 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."

By "Israel," then, in our text, we are to understand the quickened elect; God's spiritual family, in every state, stage, or circumstance of their experience. Thus it will comprehend every living soul, from the first pang of conviction to the last expiring hallelujah, from the first cry for mercy raised up in a sinner convinced of his sin to the triumph of a saint dying in the full blaze of manifested glory. And thus, of all Israel, in every state and stage of experience, in every circumstance of their spiritual life, we may say, "Let Israel hope in the Lord;" for Israel will ever have to "hope in the Lord." I do not mean

to say, that Israel will not be able to rejoice and triumph in the Lord; but as long as Israel is in the body, so long will Israel be exposed to the temptations of the flesh, the assaults of Satan, and the hatred of the world; and therefore till safely folded in the arms of the heavenly Bridegroom will there be a necessity that Israel should "hope in the Lord."

We may look, then, at "Israel" under various circumstances and in different states and stages of the divine life; and of each and of all we may still say, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." For instance,

1. There is, first, *convinced Israel*. When the Lord is pleased for the first time, to shoot from his unerring bow an arrow of conviction into the conscience, and raises up that cry in the bosom which he has never failed to hear: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "What shall I do to be saved?" 'How can I flee from the wrath to come?'—when thus under conviction, with a feeling sense of utter ruin and misery, crying to the Lord for pity and pardon, there is still a divine exhortation for Israel to "hope in the Lord." It is from the word of the Lord, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword," that this spiritual distress and exercise arise; and the same God that wounds is able and willing to heal; for "He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands maketh whole." And thus, there is every encouragement for convinced Israel to "hope in the Lord."

2. But there is *seeking Israel*. No sooner does the Lord convince of sin, than he puts a cry and sigh into the soul for his manifested mercy. And hereby the convictions of the Lord's family are distinguished from the convictions of reprobates, that in the heart of the latter there is no cry after mercy. "They cry not when he bindeth them." (Job 36:13.) But when the Lord begins a work of grace upon an elect soul,

and convinces it of sin, he plants a cry for mercy; and urges it to seek earnestly, imploringly, and perseveringly until in due time that mercy comes. The Lord will not let begging Israel seek his face in vain. He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is, therefore, every encouragement for seeking Israel to "hope in the Lord;" for from the Lord the spirit of seeking comes, and to such the promise is made.

3. Again. There is *longing, hungering, and thirsting Israel*; and Israel in this state is still bidden to "hope in the Lord;" for there are certain blessings which the Lord has to bestow on his hungering and thirsting people. He has said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6.) David also records his experience thus: "As the heart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Psa. 42:1, 2.) Whence come these holy pantings, these intense longings? Who created these ardent desires? What has made the soul thus to hunger and thirst after manifested salvation? After Jesus' atoning blood applied to the conscience, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost? Whence can they, whence do they spring, but from "the Father of lights," the unchanging and unchangeable Jehovah, from "whom cometh every good and every perfect gift." There is, therefore, every encouragement for longing, panting, hungering and thirsting Israel, to hope in the Lord.

4. But there is *believing Israel*. When faith is raised up to believe in the precious name of Jesus; when there is a gracious discovery of his Person, of his atoning blood, of his justifying righteousness, of his dying love, and of his divine suitability to every state and case; and God the Spirit is pleased to draw forth faith to look unto him, lay hold of and

clasp him, and bring him in all his beauty, preciousness, and loveliness—then there is a blessed change, and we have believing, loving, and praising Israel. But Israel is not yet safely landed; yet as anchoring within the veil she is encouraged more firmly than before "to hope in the Lord."

5. But Israel is not always here: these are for the most part short seasons. The visits of Jesus are but a "glittering," or "glancing," (as the word means,) "through the lattice;" very transient, yet enough to raise up sweet emotions of love to him who is "altogether lovely." When, therefore, these 'short visits end,' Israel is, in her feelings, *forsaken of the Lord*. She cannot find that access which she once enjoyed; the Lord does not seem to listen to her prayers as he did in former times. There are no sweet love-tokens, no precious promises applied, no blessed visits, no manifestations:—all within is dark, dark, dark as midnight. But is Israel to cast away her confidence because she is forsaken? "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, saith the Lord; but with great mercies will I gather thee." (Isa. 54:7.) "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (49:15.) There have been times and seasons when the Lord blessed Israel with his presence, smiled upon her, applied his promises to her heart, enlarged her soul with his love, drew forth her affections, fixed them upon himself, and gave her to enjoy some sweet moments of heavenly communion with his gracious Majesty. Israel is not to forget these, nor to cast them behind her back. She is, therefore, still encouraged to "hope in the Lord."

6. But there is also *tempted Israel*. Israel is not always enjoying the manifested love of her covenant Head. She is often tempted, tried, buffeted, plagued, and exercised; and yet, in all her temptations, trials, and exercises, she is still

bidden and encouraged to "hope in the Lord" that these temptations shall not swallow her up; that these severe exercises shall not prove her downfall; that these snares shall not fatally, nor fully entangle her feet; that she shall not be overcome by the number of her inward or outward foes, but be victorious over all. And thus tempted Israel is still encouraged to "hope in the Lord."

7. But there is *backsliding Israel*. How many of the Lord's family get entangled in the snares of Satan, in the lusts of their fallen nature, in the things of time and sense, in the cares and anxieties of the world, in the nets and gins that Satan spreads for their feet! How many backslide from the Lord, grow hard and callous, secure and reckless; neglect a throne of mercy; and seem as it were to fall into a state where they can scarcely trace one mark or feature of the divine image in their soul! But backsliding Israel is still encouraged to "hope in the Lord." He will not cast her off. He has said, "return unto me, ye backsliding children; for I am married unto you." The Lord's people may backslide from him; but he will not turn away from them, though they deserve to be banished entirely from his presence. Thus Israel, after her worst state of backsliding, when pierced and wounded by a sense of her guilt and sin, is still encouraged to "hope in the Lord."

Why should Israel, in these various states and circumstances, "hope in the Lord?" Because she is divinely taught to hope nowhere else. The work of the Holy Spirit upon her heart is mainly to bring about two things—a death to self, and a living unto God; a slaying of the creature, in all its shapes and forms, and a setting up of the blood, obedience, and love of Immanuel. This work takes in Israel in all her states of experience. Look at her in every stage of the divine life; whether when first convinced of sin, or seeking

after mercy, or panting after God, or believing in Jesus, or forsaken by him, or tempted by Satan, or backsliding in heart. All the dealings of God with her, in every state and stage of her experience, are to slaughter her, to make her distrust the creature in every shape and form, and bring her out of self, with all its miseries, to look to, hang upon, and "hope in the Lord," with all his mercies. Hereby Israel is distinguished from all the nations that are upon the face of the earth. Hereby "Israel of God," the Spirit-taught Zion, the quickened elect, the living family—are distinguished from all mere dead professors, however high in doctrine, or however low in doctrine. By these two features the living family of God are distinguished from all—that they put no confidence in the flesh, and that all their hope and trust is in the Lord alone. What said David? "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." (Psa. 62:5.) And is not this the state and case of every child of God, so far as the Lord is pleased to lead him into the truth,—to turn away from the creature in all its shapes and forms, and fix the heart and affections where Jesus sits at God's right hand? Thus the divine exhortation is to hope—not in self, wretched, ruined, undone, bankrupt self; not to hope in the law, which can only deal out thunders and lightnings and wither by its consuming flames every one found under that fiery dispensation; not to trust in the creature; for to trust in the creature is to lean upon a bruised reed that runs into our hand, and pierces it; not to trust in man, sinner or saint, because "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." (Jer. 17:5.) But, brought away from self, away from the law, away from the creature, as a poor perishing worm, Israel is enabled by divine teaching and divine testimony to look unto the Lord, wait upon the Lord, hope in the Lord, and cast her burden and care upon him who has said, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the



righteous to be moved." (Psa. 55:22.)

But what is this "*hope*?" There are many "hopes" that the word of God declares to be utterly fallacious. There is "the hope of the hypocrite" that cometh to nought; (Job 27:8.); the hope of the pharisee; the hope of the self-confident professor. There are "hopes" of every name and size, of every stature and dimension; nay, almost as numerous and diversified as the sons of men. And yet, all these "hopes" are but refuges of lies. The true hope is that which cometh down from God into the soul—the "good hope through grace," that springs out of the Spirit's teachings and testimony—that grace of the Spirit which lives together with faith and love. "And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love," (1 Cor. 13:13,)—a threefold cord, that cannot be broken.

II.—But we pass on to consider *the spiritual reason* which the Holy Ghost has given by the pen of the Psalmist why Israel is to "hope in the Lord." "*For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*" Two reasons, then, God the Spirit has given why Israel should "hope in the Lord."

i. One is, that "*with the Lord there is mercy.*" Observe how the text is worded. To my mind there is something very sweet in it. It does not say, "*from the Lord is mercy,*" though from the Lord all mercy comes; though from him, as the Father of lights, every good and perfect gift issues: and what more perfect gift can there be than mercy? Nor does it say, "*in the Lord there is mercy;*" though there is mercy in him, and in no other. But as though it would draw forth the affections of our soul more towards this mercy, it runs thus, "*with the Lord there is mercy.*" As though it would say, 'In his hands, in his bounteous heart, a part of his divine nature, an attribute of his eternal character. It is *with* him, and

bestowed upon his Israel, upon those who feel their deep need; yes, so with him, that none need despair who are brought to long after it, and to know that they must perish under the wrath of God without it.' If it ran thus—"From the Lord there is mercy," a poor convinced, and half-despairing soul might argue thus: 'Yes, I know *from* the Lord there is mercy; but how can I expect that mercy to come from the Lord into my soul; for I am unworthy of the least ray of mercy from him; nothing can come from him but purity and holiness, while I am all guilt, filth, and shame.' Thus it would hardly be sufficient for us. Or if the words ran, "*In* the Lord there is mercy; he might say, 'Yes, I know there is mercy *in* the Lord for the elect; but am I one of the elect?' Doubts, fears, and misgivings might harass his mind whether, though there is mercy *in* the Lord, there were mercy in the Lord *for him*. But by "with" the blessed Spirit takes a wider range, a fuller sweep, and opens the arms of mercy wider than he would have done, had the expression been "from" or "in." Thus there is encouragement for convinced, seeking, longing, forsaken, backsliding Israel to creep within these arms of mercy that fold themselves around her, and gather her into the bosom of Immanuel; for the good Shepherd will "gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. 40:11.)

"With the Lord," then, there is mercy." It is a part of his divine character; it is one of his most precious attributes.

But what is "*mercy*?" There are several ideas contained in the expression.

1. First, it intimates *compassion*. We read of the "bowels of the mercy of our God" (Luke 1:78, *margin*); and this expression implies a flowing forth of compassion and tender-heartedness towards the object of mercy. Let us look at this

in the case of the returning prodigal. How when he was coming homeward, all rags and ruin, full of confusion and shame, guilt and distress, the Father's compassion flowed forth, and his bowels yearned over his returning son! This compassion working in his bosom, was a part of the mercy which the Father showed to his returning prodigal.

2. But again. Mercy implies *pardon*; not merely compassion. We may compassionate, and yet not pardon. A judge may compassionate the criminal whom he justly condemns to death, and may mingle tears with the fatal sentence. But mercy in the mind of God is not merely confined to the flowing forth of compassion and pity. He is a sovereign; and not only can compassionate the trembling culprit, but also, by a free act of his distinguishing favour can freely forgive every transgression that he has committed.

3. But again. Mercy, also, implies that the party to whom the act is manifested, is *a criminal, a transgressor*. Mercy is not for the righteous and holy; but for the guilty sinner, the transgressor, the criminal at God's holy bar. Israel, then, is treated as a criminal, and pardoned as a criminal. Israel does not come to the throne to lay down her merits, and take up God's mercy as a counterbalance for them; but Israel comes as a poor criminal, ruined and undone, sentenced and condemned by God's righteous law. And to none other but criminals, deeply dyed criminals, will the sound of mercy be sweet. But oh, what a sweet sound is there in mercy, when pardoning love reaches the conscience! when the mercy of God is manifested by his blotting out and casting behind his back all Israel's guilt, filth and shame!

Now here is the exhortation, the divine exhortation, "Let Israel hope in the Lord;"—Israel sunk, however low; Israel tempted, however severely; Israel condemning herself,

however justly; Israel almost on the brink of despair;—let her still "hope in the Lord." Has she ceased to hope in the creature? Has she ceased to look to an arm of flesh? Does she despair of salvation from any other source or quarter but the blood of the Lamb? Is she crying, sighing, longing, panting, and begging of the Lord to appear in her soul? "Let Israel," then, "hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy." He will not spurn his waiting Israel from his feet; he will not smite her with the lightnings of his wrath; he will show mercy to the poor guilty sinner that comes with dust upon his head, clothed with sackcloth and ashes, mourning and lamenting his vileness before the Lord. There is no wrath in the bosom of the Lord against *him*; there is mercy, pardoning mercy in the bosom of Jehovah for Israel; therefore "let Israel hope in the Lord." If Israel look to herself, she cannot have one grain of hope; if she look to the law she cannot have one ray of expectation; or if she look to an arm of flesh, none can do her good. But if Israel looks "to the hills from whence cometh her help"—to God the Father, in his electing love—to God the Son, in his redeeming blood—to God the Spirit, in his sanctifying work; if Israel is thus enabled to anchor within the veil, thus to "hope in the Lord," her hope shall not be cut off, shall not be disappointed; it shall not be as "the hope of the hypocrite," a spider's web, that the first gust of eternal displeasure shall for ever sweep away.

ii. But there is another reason—"*And with him is plenteous redemption.*" How this text is perverted! I never heard many sermons from Arminian preachers since I knew anything of divine things; but I doubt not that this passage has been abused by thousands, to prove, or attempt to prove, universal redemption. But how they overlook "Israel" here! If it ran thus—"Let the *world* hope in the Lord;" then there would have been some colouring from plenteous redemption

being universal redemption. But when it runs so clearly and is backed up by, "He shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities," how limited immediately does the word become! And yet, though limited in extent as regards persons, yet plenteous in itself towards those characters to whom it comes. And I am very sure that nothing but "plenteous" redemption can suit you and me.

But what is "*redemption*?" Does it not signify a buying, a purchase? and if it signify a buying, a purchase, there must be a price laid down. If I go into a shop, and buy an article, of course I lay my money down, and take up the article; otherwise it is not buying, but cheating. So spiritually. Redemption implies an actual price. What is this price? The blood of the Lamb. "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) *That* was the redemption price; and when we look at it in the Spirit's light, how "plenteous" is that redemption! View it as the blood of the Son of God—the Godhead giving infinite and eternal value and efficacy to it—how precious must that blood be—the blood of God! As the Apostle says, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) Not that God can bleed any more than God can die; but the God-Man, "Immanuel, God with us," bled and died. Oh, how great, how precious, how plenteous then, that redemption must be, that was effected by the blood of Christ! Now, when we look at redemption in this point of view—*first*, at the infinite virtue and efficacy of redemption, seeing it was God who became incarnate, and God-Man, Immanuel, bled and died upon the cross: and, *secondly*, at the demerit of sin, its awful character, its dreadful nature;—when we look at redemption in these two points of view, we see that nothing short of a "plenteous redemption" could suit our souls, or save us from

the wrath to come. What am I? what are you? but a desperately wicked wretch—a vile, an awful vile sinner—a monster of iniquity? What then, can save such wretches from the very depths of hell—what can redeem us from the wrath to come, and bathe our souls in the raptures of endless bliss, instead of howling for ever beneath the wrath of God—I say, what can thus take us from the very jaws of hell, and transport us to the gates of heaven but "plenteous redemption?" What but the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin, can deliver my guilty, polluted, justly condemned soul, can snatch it from the jaws of hell, and lift it up to the bosom of God to be with him through the countless ages of eternity? It must be "plenteous redemption" to do this for one sinner—I repeat, for *one* sinner! When we view sin in all its aggravated nature, all its magnitude, all its defilement, all its horrible, most detestable, and abominable character; when we view even the sin of one day, or one hour, as opposed to the infinite purity of the Lord God Almighty; what short of "plenteous redemption" can pluck *one* sinner from the jaws of eternal destruction? But when we include all the elect of God, as numerous as the stars in the winter sky, or the sands upon the seashore, what short of "plenteous redemption" can save the whole election of grace? I cannot call that "plenteous redemption" which meets me half way. It must come into my very conscience, be dropt from the mouth of God into my very heart, and save me body and soul as a lost sinner from the wrath to come, or it cannot be a redemption suited to my aggravated sins, my desperate case. But "with him"—in his bosom, in his heart, in his hands, in his dying love, in his risen power—in all that he is and all that he has for the church of God—"with him his plenteous redemption;" and therefore, "let Israel hope in the Lord;" because with the Lord is mercy, even for such a wretch as I, and "plenteous redemption" even for one so deeply stained with guilt as thou.

III.—We pass on, as time is waning, to the *gracious promise*; "And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." If we were to listen to what people say about Christians and believers, we should think they had no sin about them; that they were so holy, spiritual, and religious that sin and they had for ever parted company; that when they gave themselves to the Lord, they shook hands with sin, and never had to do with it more. Nay, if you would believe some, they had long ago buried sin, and written his funeral epitaph; and you might walk in their beautifully laid out, neatly gravelled and flower-decked cemetery on a summer evening, and see written, 'here lies sin!' Foolish, foolish men! ignorant, ignorant creatures! deceivers! perverters of God's truth! I say feelingly, that we never know anything about sin, nor what sin is, till God is pleased to quicken our souls to fear his great Name. We do not know its hideousness, its mighty power, its subtle insinuations—the iniquity, the horrid iniquity, we carry in our bosom—till God is pleased to plant his precious fear in our hearts.

But look at our text—"He shall redeem Israel from all his *iniquities*." No light word that. Not, 'his little peccadillos,' 'his slight failings,' 'his slender faults;' as though Israel were such a pious, humble, excellent creature, that it was only once or twice throughout the year that he did or thought anything wrong. "His iniquities!"—a strong word that; but no stronger than the case justifies, no stronger than every one taught of God feels he deserves. And "*all* his iniquities." We might have thought, if we talked with some people, that Israel had not above half-a-dozen iniquities. But the word of God says, "*all* his iniquities." Let us look at some of them.

Iniquities of *eye*—has conscience no voice there? Is no iniquity ever practiced by your eye? Let conscience speak. Iniquity of *ear*—is there no iniquity that enters into your

heart through the ear? You cannot listen to a conversation in the street, without iniquity entering into your heart through what Bunyan calls, "Ear-gate." Iniquity of *lip*—do you always keep your tongue as with a bridle? Do your lips never drop anything unbecoming the gospel? Is there no carnal conversation, no angry word at home, no expression that you would not like the saints of God to hear? What! your lips always kept so strictly, that there is never a single expression dropt from them which you would be ashamed to utter before an assembly of God's people? Iniquity of *thought*—if your eyes, ears, and lips are clean, is there no iniquity of thought? What! in that workshop within no iniquitous suggestions, no evil workings? Oh, how ignorant must we be of ourselves, if we feel that we have no iniquity of thought! Iniquity of *imagination*—does not fancy sometimes bring before you scenes of sensuality in which your carnal heart is vile enough to revel? Iniquity of *memory*—does not memory sometimes bring back sins you formerly committed, and your evil nature is perhaps base enough to desire they had been greater? Iniquity of *feeling*—no enmity against God's people ever working? no pride of heart? no covetousness? no hypocrisy? no self-righteousness? no sensuality? no base thoughts that you cannot disclose even to your bosom friend? Let conscience speak in your bosom. I know what conscience says in mine. I do not stand before you as a holy being. God knows the iniquities I daily, hourly feel working in my carnal mind, oft to my grief and shame.

But here is the blessed promise—a promise only suited to Israel; for all but Israel lose sight of their iniquities, and justify themselves in self-righteousness. None but Israel feel and confess their iniquities; and therefore to Israel is the promise of redemption limited—"He shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities." What! *all*? Yes. Not *one* left? No, not a



trace, not a shade, not the shadow of a shade; all buried, all gone, all swallowed up, all blotted out, all freely pardoned, all cast behind God's back. If a single spot or wrinkle could be found upon our souls before the Majesty of heaven, it would condemn us for ever to the lowest hell! therefore the church stands before God, in Christ, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Eph. 5:27.) "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." (Sol. Song 4: 7.)

But again. There is the *guilt* of iniquity, that our conscience feels and groans under. There is the *filth* of iniquity, that so defiles us and puts us to shame. There is the *power* of iniquity, the inward working of sin, ever striving for the mastery. But God has said, "He shall redeem (or deliver) Israel from *all* his iniquities"—iniquities of eye, ear, thought, imagination, memory, action, lip, and life—from every iniquity, its guilt, its filth, and its power—he shall redeem and deliver, wash and cleanse his Israel perfectly and completely from all.

Now, is there not every encouragement here for Israel to "hope in the Lord?" 'Yes,' the answer rises, 'every reason; but am I one of this Israel?' Well, can you find some of the features of Israel traced out this morning? I have gone as low as I could, to mark out the very first work of God upon the soul. Surely you can come in here, if God has quickened your soul into spiritual life. Has he convinced you of guilt, and made you cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner?" Has he taught you to seek his face, given you a spirit of prayer, raised up hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, and brought you to beg and cry that he would appear in your soul? These are marks and features of a divine work upon your conscience. You are one of God's Israel if you can find these things in your heart. "Behold," said the Lord, in the early days of Nathanael, whom he had seen under the fig-

tree, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47.) There is no guile in a true Israelite, but honesty, integrity, and sincerity.

Now, the Lord will encourage his Israel in every stage and state, in every case and circumstance, to hope in him—to hope in his word (as David says, "I hope in thy word," Psa. 119:81), in his invitations, in his truths, in himself; in *himself*, I repeat, as made manifest in our conscience, as from time to time revealed to our souls. But why should Israel "hope in the Lord?" On what grounds? What reason is given for it? "With the Lord there is mercy"—mercy to pardon the blackest crimes, to absolve the deepest-dyed transgressor. Nay, more; "and with him is plenteous redemption." A price has been paid; God's justice has been satisfied; the holy law has had all its demands; God's attributes do not clash; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psa. 85:10.) And thus, "he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities," however numerous, however aggravated, however powerful they may be. How suitable and encouraging, therefore, is this divine exhortation: The Lord drop it, from his own mouth, from time to time, into our hearts!