

The Dropping Down of the Heavens, and the Opening of the Earth

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"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it." Isaiah 45:8

In revealing the Scriptures God has seen fit to make great use of figures; so that we can scarcely open any part of the Bible without finding them, more or less, employed. The Lord himself declares in the Old Testament, (Hosea 12:10,) "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets;" and in the New, we can scarcely open a page of the gospels without finding some parable from the Lord's lips, which is but another form of figure or divine similitude. Among these figures there is scarcely one more prominent than that of *dew* or *rain*. And the Lord the Spirit seems especially to have fixed upon this figure of dew and rain as an emblem of his own power and unction in the heart and conscience of God's people. Thus Moses said of what he spake by divine inspiration, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." (Deut. 32:2.) So the Lord says of his own divine operations, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." (Isa. 44:3.) It was a custom among the Jews, on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles, to pour out water in the courts of the temple as figurative of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. And to this the Lord Jesus

evidently refers in those words, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37, 38.) We have the same figure of rain also employed very sweetly, Psalm 65:9-12: "*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof; thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness.*" And if we look at our text, we shall find the same figure employed to set forth the same divine operations: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it."

Without laying down any formal divisions, I think we may observe three distinct and remarkable things in our text.

I.—*The dropping down of the heavens from above.*

II.—*The opening of the earth from beneath.*

III.—*The bringing forth of salvation, and the springing up of righteousness, as the fruit and effect of the dropping down from above, and the opening of the earth beneath. And in this way, if the Lord give me power and ability to bring forth what I see and feel to be its spiritual meaning, I shall endeavour to handle the passage before us this morning.*

The Lord himself speaks in the text, and addresses himself to the heavens—"*Drop down, ye heavens, from above.*"

The heavens naturally are the source of all the fertility of the earth; nor could there be any fruit or grain from the earth, nor could man or beast exist a single day upon it, unless the heavens above communicated to it fruitfulness. The atmosphere whereby the earth is surrounded, and the dews and rain that fall from that atmosphere, are the sources of all the fertility that we witness in the earth; and could these mysterious operations of nature cease, or be suspended for a single day, the earth would languish away, and all its inhabitants perish. Now, as naturally, so much more spiritually, all the fruits found in the hearts and consciences of God's people, every thing good, every thing spiritual, every thing holy, every thing gracious in them, comes down from above; as James so emphatically declares, "Every good gift and every perfect gift *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) From the heavens, then, drop down all the gracious communications of light, life, and power that are ever found in the heart of God's people, and make them fruitful in every good word and work.

But there is a peculiar reason why the heavens spiritually should be the source and fountain of every thing good and gracious in us. Who is in the heavens but the risen Mediator? Is he not at the right hand of the Father as the covenant Head of his church and people? And out of his fulness ("for it has pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell,") does not every thing good and gracious come down into the consciences of those whom he loves? And this, we may observe, in a perpetually recurring circle. We read, "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." (Eccl. 1:7.) So spiritually, no man will ever be in heaven, whose name was not eternally registered in heaven; and no man will go to heaven who has not his Representative

already there at the right hand of the Father, and is not one of the mystical body whose risen Head is in glory, but whose members are in suffering circumstances upon earth. If, then, any of us are going to heaven, if heaven is to be our home and our eternal abode, it is because we had a dwelling-place spiritually and mystically in heaven before we had any existence on earth. So that, in going to heaven, we are but going to the place whence we came, because we were there in Christ as our covenant head, before time had an existence, or this round world was created. In that sense the heavens are the source of all present fruitfulness.

But much more since Jesus is ascended on high, as we read, "When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;" and he "ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4:8, 10.) Much more now do the heavens become the source of all fertility produced in the hearts of God's children, for we are and have nothing spiritually good except what we receive out of the covenant fulness of a covenant Head. So that, when the Lord says in the text, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above;" and calls upon them to let dew fall; it is as though he spake thus, "Out of Jesus' fulness, who sits enthroned in majesty and glory, as the covenant Head of his Church, full of grace and power, let the dew and rain of his grace drop into the hearts of his people." So that, the spiritual dew and rain are sure to come in the appointed season; seeing there is a covenant fulness in Jesus, out of which they drop into the hearts of his people, because God has already "blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:3, 4.) So when, in the text, the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above," he calls upon them to let fall their dew as figurative of the coming down of

the Spirit into their hearts.

But why should the Lord have selected the figure of "*dew*" to set forth the coming down of the Spirit into the soul? There must be something in natural dew analogous to the spiritual dew, or the Lord would not have employed such a figure. Let us, then, observe two or three circumstances in which the analogy is evident.

1. *Dew falls down independently of the power and will of the creature.* Who can command the dew to drop down? Who can go forth at night, and say, "Dew fall?" It falls just as, and when God sends it; on some nights it falls, on others it falls not; each wholly depending on the sovereign will and power of the Creator. So spiritually. Who can command the dew and rain to fall into the hearts of God's people? Who can go, and say, "Dew of the Spirit, fall?" Who can command the grace of God to visit this or that individual? The dew, spiritually, falls just as the God of grace would have it; as the dew naturally falls, just as the God of creation would have it.

2. But in the falling of the natural dew *there is something soft, still, and gentle.* We therefore read, "We will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground." (2 Sam. 17:12), that is, stealthily and unseen. It does not rush down like the pelting hail, but falls stilly, and often imperceptibly: so that we scarcely know it has fallen, till we go out in the morning, and see every blade of grass tipped with the sparkling dew-drops; by these bright gems we know that dew has fallen during the still hours of the night. So spiritually, the kingdom of God is not in noise, rant, or wild excitement. The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11, 12.) And thus there may be a great deal of religious fire, but no presence of God felt: fleshly passions worked up into a storm, but no

"still small voice" speaking to the conscience: a very earthquake of natural convictions, but no inward "demonstration of the Spirit and of power." But when the spiritual dew falls, it drops gently, softly, and stilly into the heart, and it is only known by the sweet and blessed effects it produces.

3. But again. Dew, naturally, has a *softening effect*, especially in warm climates, where it falls very copiously. We therefore read "Thou makest it soft with showers." (Ps. 65:10.) It does not tear up the ground as with thunderbolts, but by moistening and softening penetrates into the soil. And thus the dew of God's grace moistens and softens the heart, humbles, dissolves, and fertilizes it; not by tearing it up with the thunderbolts of wrath and condemnation, but by dropping gently and stilly into it, so as to melt it into contrition, meekness, and godly sorrow before the throne of mercy and grace.

But when the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above," they drop down not only dew, but sometimes *showers* also; as we find the Prophet speaking, "For as *the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven*, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." (Isa. 55:10.) The rain which the heavens drop down at the word of the Lord has the same effect as the *dew*, and only differs in being more copious. Rain is therefore needed more after a dry season. How, after this long season of drought, for instance, under which nature has pined, have a few showers refreshed the soil! How before our eyes has the dry, burnt-up ground, since the late fertilizing showers, resumed its livery of green, and the brown hills re clothed themselves in their wonted garb of verdure, and again look fresh and beautiful! And do not the souls of God's people

become withered and dry, when neither dew nor rain fall, until they resemble the barren wilderness and the parched heath? But the heavens drop down rain and dew, and the soul becomes once more revived out of its barrenness and dearth.

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness." Two expressions are here made use of, which seem to have a special allusion to dew and rain. The one is applicable to the dew, which "*drops*;" and the other, to rain, which "*pours down*." But whether in drops or showers, each lets fall the same blessing—*righteousness*.

What *righteousness*, then, is this which the heavens sometimes drop, and sometimes pour down? If we have any righteousness, where is it? It is in the heavens: we have none here. What read we? "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and *righteousness*." (1 Cor. 1:30.) "*In the Lord* have I *righteousness* and strength;" "*In the Lord* shall all the seed of Israel be *justified*, and shall glory." (Isa. 45:24, 25.) This imputed righteousness is called in the Scriptures, "the righteousness of God," because it is the righteousness of him who is God; the righteousness of Emmanuel, who is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and bestows it from heaven upon his needy, naked, shivering, destitute people. The Lord therefore says in the text, "Let the skies pour down righteousness;" that it may come down as in a shower. Thus, when God does manifest it to the soul, it is always through the revelation of the Holy Ghost. We can have no experimental acquaintance with Christ's righteousness, nor any spiritual enjoyment of it, except as brought down into the heart through the power of God the Spirit. When the skies pour down righteousness, so that a sense of Christ's righteousness is brought with divine power into the conscience, then, and then only, is it rightly received. But we

look to the earth to bring forth fruit after the dew and showers. Look at those portions of the earth where they have no rain nor showers to fertilize the soil. What can they produce? They are a wild waste. The earth cannot produce fruit until the showers and dew come upon it; nor can a man's heart produce anything spiritually good until "God works in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

II.—And this leads us to the second point—"*Let the earth open*" from beneath. What is meant by the term "*earth*?" By "earth" we are to understand the heart of man. We read, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." (Jer. 22:29.) "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." (Deut. 32:1.) Has the literal earth ears to hear? Does God speak to the natural soil? That is a lump of inanimate matter, a huge clod of stone and clay; that has no ears to hear the word of God. When the Lord, then, speaks to the earth, it is not to the soil, but to *the dwellers upon the soil*. And thus the earth spiritually represents the heart of man. And why so? Because until fertilized by the showers of God's grace, man's heart is but a lump of inanimate matter;

"A lifeless lump of loathsome clay."

As unable to bring forth fruit to God's glory as the earth is unable of itself to start forth into fertility and productiveness.

Now, the Lord says in the text, "*Let the earth open.*" This points to the opening of the heart by the power of divine grace. The Lord, we read, "opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of by Paul," (Acts 16:14); and we read also, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Ps. 119:130.) But if the word enters, there must be an opening for it: nay, its very entrance makes the

opening. Thus, when the Lord says, "Let the earth open," he bids the heart, before closed up and impenetrable, open itself to receive the dews and showers of his invincible grace.

Whenever the Lord speaks, he speaks *powerfully*; "Where the word of a king is, there is power." (Eccl. 8:4.) No sooner, then, does the Lord thus speak than the effect follows. When the Lord said, "Let there be light," instantly there was light. When he said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind," immediately the earth was covered with fruits and flowers. When he commanded, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven," the sun and moon immediately sprang into existence. He had but to speak, and the effect immediately followed. So, when the Lord says, "Let the earth open," the heart immediately opens, the conscience is made tender, and the soul hears and receives what God speaks.

And what follows this opening? The heart receives the dews and showers of God's grace that fall into it; and these dews and showers of God's grace communicate to it softness, fertility, and productiveness. O how we have to learn this by painful experience! Is not our heart as hard sometimes as the nether millstone; and, to our feelings, utterly destitute of light, life, and power, without one grain of brokenness, contrition, godly sorrow, spiritual desire, or fervent breathing after the Lord? And are we not often as dead, and apparently as conscience-seared, as though we had never been melted down into godly sorrow, as though the tear of contrition had never dropped from our eyes, or the sigh of godly emotion had never heaved from our bosom? This painful experience the Lord's people have to pass through perpetually, that they may know, that "in them that is in their flesh dwelleth no good thing," and that "power belongeth unto God." Could I make my own heart soft, should I want the Lord to do it for

me? Could I communicate fertility to my own soul, should I ever pant after the dews and showers of the Holy Ghost? Could I bring pardon and peace into my own conscience, should I need the Lord himself to speak with power? Could I believe, hope, rejoice, and have at my own command every gracious and blessed feeling that I desire to experience, there would be no pleading the Lord's own promises, no wrestling in importunate prayer, no taking the kingdom of God by violence, no longing and panting for the Lord to appear in our souls. The Lord therefore sees fit that we should walk in these paths, that we may know, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. 9:16.)

But when the Lord says, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness," he says also, at the same moment, "Let the earth open;" and the earth opens to receive as instantaneously as the heavens to give. No sooner do the dews and showers of God's grace fall, than there is an opening of the heart to receive the truth in the love and power of it. These dews and showers penetrate into and reach the very depths of a man's conscience. Sometimes it is with us, as during this long season of drought, a few drops only have fallen, a hasty shower, which has soon dried up. The farmer said, "The rain did not go deep enough." The gardener complained that it did not sink below the surface of the soil; something more abundant, something heavier and more lasting was wanted, a good soaking rain that would penetrate down to the very roots of the plants. So spiritually, we have a little feeling sometimes, but not very deep; a drop or two for a few moments; but it is gone immediately. This is indeed better than a continued drought; but we want a good hearty shower that shall go to the very root, something that shall penetrate to the very depths of the heart, and sink deep into the soul; as the Lord said to his

disciples, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." (Luke 9:44.) Many people say, "How well they have heard to-day." But what is their hearing well? A few drops dried up immediately in the dust of carnality, or soon burned up by the sun of temptation. They say, "How well they have heard," but they have not moved a hundred yards from where they have heard so well, but their hearts are as dead, as dry, as hard as the ground after a long drought. A man whose heart is really made tender in God's fear is not content with a few transient feelings, which leave him as hard as they found him; he wants a shower to penetrate into the very roots of his soul, to soften and melt the heart before the Lord. When the earth opens, how it receives, embraces, and drinks in the showers that fall into it. And the wider it opens its ample bosom to receive, the deeper does the rain penetrate, and the greater fertility is produced. And thus, the more that the heart opens all its capacious longings and pantings to receive the grace of God in its manifestations, the more is spiritual fruitfulness and fertility produced.

I.—But what is the fruit and effect of the dropping down of the heavens, the pouring out of the skies from above, and the opening of the earth from beneath to receive? *"Let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together."*

1. The first fruit and effect is, *"the bringing forth of salvation."* The expression, "Let them bring forth," is a Hebrew idiom, for "Let it be brought forth." We find this Hebraism in the New Testament, Luke 16:9. "Make to yourselves friends of the manner of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." It has puzzled many persons to know what is intended by the expression, "they may receive you:" but it is merely a Hebrew idiom for *that ye may be received*. So here,

"Let them bring forth salvation," means, *Let salvation be brought forth*. And is not this experimentally true? Is not salvation brought forth into the heart and conscience, when the dew drops down grace, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to receive the gift of heaven?

The skies pour down Christ's righteousness—his glorious imputed righteousness. There is no salvation by any other righteousness; for "there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39.) And salvation can only be brought forth experimentally in the heart and conscience by the heavens dropping down the dew of grace, and the skies pouring down a shower of this imputed righteousness, and the heart opening to receive it in faith, hope, and affection.

How many people are looking to *self* to bring forth salvation, to their good works, their consistency of life, their attempts at reformation, their doings for the past, or their intentions for the future. And what fruit do they reap by all their pains? Vanity and vexation here, and everlasting condemnation hereafter. Man, fallen creature man, can never do anything spiritually good, or bring forth one thing out of his heart that God can be pleased with. To know, to feel, and to be deeply concerned about this, lies at the root of all vital godliness; and till a man learns this by the teachings of the Spirit, he knows nothing of what spiritual religion is. As the Lord, then, leads our souls into a knowledge of their darkness, barrenness, emptiness, and nothingness; and as we become more deeply and daily acquainted with our thorough helplessness and impotency, we become convinced that God is the only Giver of every good and perfect gift; and this

conviction being wrought into our conscience makes us feel the need of, and long after revelations and manifestations of grace, mercy, and salvation to our soul. The more we are out of conceit with ourselves, the more do we fall in love with Jesus; the more loosed from ourselves, the more closely do we cleave to him. Thus, until we are thoroughly convinced, and well humbled too under the spiritual conviction of it, that we have no righteousness, salvation, hope, or help in self, we shall not be looking up to the heavens that from thence the dew and rain may come down into our consciences. But when, after a long season of drought, the heavens begin to drop down the dew, and the skies to pour down righteousness, and the heart opens to embrace the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ, salvation is brought forth into the conscience. Is not the earth entirely dependent on the dews and showers to bring forth fruit? So the bringing forth of salvation is entirely dependent on the dews and showers of righteousness dropping into the soul. How am I to receive and become personally interested in salvation? It must come down from heaven to my heart; it must be revealed by the Spirit to my conscience. I can have no feeling enjoyment of salvation till Christ's righteousness is poured into my soul, and my heart is opened by the Spirit to receive it. It is only thus I receive Christ as my righteousness, and embrace his finished work as all my salvation and all my desire. Ruth said to Boaz, "Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid, for thou art a near kinsman." (Ruth 3:9.) This spreading of the skirt was a pledge of marriage and protection. Love and helplessness struggled together in Ruth's bosom, and brought out that cry. She lay humbly at his feet till he took her to his side, and the gleaner became an honourable wife.

Now how different is this way of salvation from all the ways that man devises for himself! How low it lays the creature, that "salvation is of the Lord!" Jonah had to get into the belly

of hell to learn this. (Jonah 2:9.) O what would not man do, if he could get to heaven by doings? What weight would he not attempt to raise, if by turning the winch, he could crane up his soul into heaven? But there is no clambering up to heaven; that was tried at Babel; they raised their tower of eight stages, but God came down and confounded their speech. And since the days of Babel, all attempts to clamber to heaven by the towers of our own righteousness, will end in confusion and destruction.

2. "*And let righteousness spring up together.*" Two things here are spoken of as the fruit and effect of the dew and showers from above, and the opening of the earth to receive them—the bringing forth of salvation—and the springing up of righteousness. This "springing up of righteousness" may be understood, in one sense, as the internal knowledge of righteousness, a sense of justification made known by God's Spirit. But I think there is another and deeper meaning connected with it, for we have had that already intimated in the words, "Let them bring forth salvation." I think, therefore, it rather means, an inward righteousness produced in heart and conscience by the Spirit.

There are three kinds of righteousness, or at least three kinds of righteousness which bear that name. There is *inherent* righteousness, of which we have none. There is *imputed* righteousness, which is all our justification. And there is *imparted* righteousness, when God the Spirit makes us new creatures, and raises up in the heart that "new man, which after God" (that is, "after the image of God") is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) When the Lord, therefore, said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20.) He did not mean only an *external* righteousness wrought out

by his obedience to the law *for* them, but an *internal* righteousness wrought out by the Holy Spirit *in* them. Thus, we read of the inward as well as the outward apparel of the church. "The King's daughter is all glorious *within*; *her clothing* is of wrought gold." (Psa. 14:13.) Two kinds of righteousness belong to the Queen; her imputed righteousness is her *outward* robe, "the *clothing* of wrought gold;" but imparted righteousness is her *inward* adorning, which makes her "all glorious *within*." This inward glory is the new man in the heart, with all his gifts and graces, what Peter calls "the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:1.) "Christ in the heart, the hope of glory."

Thus, when the heavens drop down their dew, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to embrace it, not only is *salvation* brought forth in the heart, but "*righteousness*" also "springs up together," a righteousness produced by the inward work of the Spirit on the conscience, its main fruit being that "love, which is the fulfilling of the law." Many persons are trying to please God by their righteousness, their consistency, their holiness, their attempts to do something for his glory. But why is it that so many fail in their attempts, and fall so utterly short? Why is it, when the people of God look at their deeds, all appear defiled and polluted? The reason is this, for the most part, because they put things in the place where God has not put them. The Lord puts "salvation" before "righteousness," and the work of the Spirit upon the heart before the fruit that springs out of that work. The gardener need not be surprised that he has no crop, after he had well dug the soil, and hoed and raked the garden, if he had never sown any seed, nor set any plants in the beds. He need not wonder, that with all his digging, hoeing, raking, and watering, his garden produced neither fruit nor flower. Why, the main thing was wanting. So spiritually, men dig, hoe, and rake their hearts;

and then they wonder that no crop is produced. The Spirit of God has never sown the seed of the word in their consciences, nor planted his graces in their soul. The Church is compared to a garden, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." (Sol. Song 4:12.) She therefore says, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." (Verse 16.) Eat what? *My* pleasant fruits? No. *His* pleasant fruits, for it is *his* garden. "From me is thy fruit found." Thus the great Husbandman has to sow and plant his graces in the soul, as the gardener sows his seeds and plants his flowers in the beds and borders. Then his hoeing, raking, and watering will bring a crop. So we must have first the heavens dropping down dew, the skies pouring down righteousness, and the heart opening to receive it; and when salvation is inwardly planted and brought forth, righteousness will spring up together with it; and then there will be a crop of inward righteousness. Separation from the world, deadness to its spirit, mortification of sin, crucifixion of the flesh, a putting off of the old man and a putting on of the new; simplicity, godly sincerity, uprightness, integrity, faith, hope, and love in blessed exercise; a conscience made and kept alive in God's fear; yea, every good word and every good work will be brought forth by the power of the Spirit in the heart, when the heavens drop down dew, and the skies pour down righteousness, and the earth opens to receive them, and salvation is brought forth in the heart. This inward righteousness will always spring up in the soul together with salvation, because it is experimentally and essentially connected with it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 21:14.) But what can make me holy? Not my own exertions, not my vows, resolutions, and promises; not my fastings, alms-deeds and bodily mortifications. This is but Pharisaism and Popery. God must give and work in me true holiness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a

right spirit within me." (Psa. 51:10.) It is only by a knowledge of righteousness, and through a sense of salvation, that the Holy Ghost brings forth in the heart "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. 6:22.) So that would we be holy, we cannot be so in our own strength: we can only be so as God the Spirit lets the dew of his grace fall into our consciences, as the showers of righteousness fall into the soul, and as God opens the heart to receive his mercy and his truth.

And then the Lord winds up the whole with that short and expressive sentence, "*I the Lord have created it.*" What a jealous God he is! "He will not give his glory to another." But the rebel man, a wretch that God with one frown could wave out of existence, and could trample upon in a moment as we trample upon a worm in our path—that a rebel like man should talk of what he has done, or means to do for the Lord, should boast of his mighty feats and proud exploits—why, how sunk in the depths of ignorance must he be that such a thought should even come into his heart! What a plague-spot must there be upon him, that a crawling, grovelling wretch like man, that only exists by tolerance, should talk of his doings and exertions! As well might we expect a bankrupt lawyer, imprisoned in Newgate for forgery, to boast of what he will do when he sits as Lord Chancellor on the woolsack; as well might we expect an aged pauper, living upon half-a-crown a week, to talk of what he means to do when he sits in the senate, or mounts the throne; as for a bankrupt wretch like man, who, if grace prevent not, only lives to be damned, talk of what he intends to do for God. The Lord therefore puts an extinguisher on all the doings of man, when he says, "*I the Lord have created it.*" It is all my work, all the effect of my sovereign power, all my divine creation; I, the Lord have done it. And who, after this challenge, dares sit upon his throne, and take the sceptre from his hand? Shall a

grovelling worm dare creep upon the Lord's throne of power? Shall a maggot crawl up and sit by the side of Jehovah? The Lord has extinguished this rebel pride of man, when he says, "I have created it," and takes all the glory to himself. Sure I am, if you and I know anything of God and of ourselves, we shall fall down in the depths of creature abasement, and say, 'Let God be glorified; let God be all in all, and let me fall into the lowest spot of nothingness.' *"I, the Lord have created it."* What? I create the dew of grace to fall, the showers of righteousness to descend, and the opening of the heart to embrace. I have created salvation to be brought forth in the conscience; I have created righteousness to spring up with it. "I the Lord," alone, wholly and solely, by the might of my hand, and my sovereign power; and none but *"I, the Lord, have created it."* Now, this is a humbling doctrine to the proud wretch, who, like the frog in the fable, would fain swell himself up to the size of an ox, with his own doings; it is humbling to the self-righteous Pharisee, who is pleased with what he has already done for the Lord, and is still more pleased with the noble avenue, the long vista of good works which he intends to do for him. How pleased is a nobleman, sometimes, with projecting plantations, and has already in his mind's eye a noble avenue of oaks and limes that shall one day rise up in his park; but the self-righteous Pharisee looks with greater delight at the grand avenue of good works that he is about to raise up, when, poor wretch, all his exertions could not raise up a shrub.

But to those who know their own ruin, and helplessness, and complete imbecility, it is sweet to find that the Lord takes the whole matter into his own hand; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end; and that he works in our hearts that which is well-pleasing in his sight. And when they come to that safe and blessed spot—to have nothing, and yet possess all things; to be

ignorant, and yet to have wisdom in Christ; defiled, yet to be sanctified in Christ; captives, yet redeemed by Christ; to have nothing in ourselves, and yet to have all in him—this will suit beggars and bankrupts, comes down to the necessities of the poor and needy, and is adapted to all the wants of the pauper. And thus, when God the Spirit brings light, life, and salvation into the conscience, the soul comes to that blessed spot, where it takes all the shame, and ascribes to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost Israel's Three-One Jehovah, all the praise and all the glory.