

## THE POOR SET IN SAFETY

Preached on Lord's Day Evening, August 29th, 1841, at Allington, near Devizes.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him" Psalm 12:5

The members of the quickened family of God have at all times and in all places closely resembled each other. The features indeed and complexion may somewhat differ in each; but the same family likeness is stamped upon them all. Just the same trials and exercises that the saints have to pass through now, they passed through in times of old; and just the same deliverances that they receive, or are longing to receive now, did they receive, or long to receive, in the ages that are past. It is this similarity of experience, as traced out in the Scriptures, that makes the Word of God to be so rich a breast of consolation to God's poor and needy family.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

God's Word deals with and is addressed to **characters**. The **names** of the elect are in the Lamb's book of life above, but the **characters** of the elect are in the Scriptures of truth below; nor can anyone know his name to be "written in heaven" **Lu 10:20** whose character is not traced out in the book that we have upon earth. With characters then, and not with names, have ministers to deal; and their work is so to trace out the characters of the spiritually taught family as "to

commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" **2Co 4:2**.

We have two such characters mentioned in the text; one called "**poor**", and said to be **oppressed**, and another called "**needy**", and said to **sigh**; and the Lord, on account of the oppression of the one, and on account of the sighing of the other, declares that He will arise to do that work for them and in them, which alone can deliver them, and set them in a place of security and safety.

I. The first character then spoken of in the text is "**the poor.**" We are not to suppose that this expression merely points out a few individuals out of God's family—a few poor abject creatures marked out for spiritual adversity, whilst the rest escape free. No; it is a character stamped upon all the quickened children without a single exception. All the saints of God are not poor temporally, but they are all poor spiritually. The Lord implied this when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" **Mt 5:3**, clearly intimating thereby that the kingdom of heaven is theirs, and theirs only.

But what is it which makes a vessel of mercy thus spiritually poor, and brings into the soul a sense of its deep poverty, utter destitution, complete beggary, and thorough bankruptcy? It is the Lord opening the eyes of our spiritual understanding to see what true riches are. If a man's eyes are not in a measure enlightened to see what heavenly riches and vital godliness are, what is the work of the Spirit, and what he himself must personally experience, before he can know Christ, here, and behold Him as He is hereafter; if it is not laid with weight and power on his conscience what he must taste, enjoy, and divinely realise of the kingdom of God

in his soul, before he is manifestly an heir of glory, he will never be brought down into the depths of soul poverty.

So that the soul is brought to be spiritually poor by a kind of double process, first, by the taking away of all its fancied riches, and then by the opening up to it with power what **true** riches are. A man is never spiritually poor until he is stripped of all his strength, all his wisdom, all his righteousness, all his hopes, pleas, and vain confidence, and has everything taken from him on which he can look with satisfaction, or rest upon with comfort. But until the Lord stretches forth His hand, and strips us Himself, we are never brought into the depths of soul poverty. We may fancy that we know a great deal about it; but till the Lord pulls us down from our lofty station, breaks our bank, and lays us in ruins before Him, we know nothing of what it is to be thoroughly poor.

Now the Lord has not chalked out for Himself any particular road by which He shall bring His people to this state. They shall all be brought there, **that** is most certain; every one of the elect shall be made spiritually poor; they shall all stand without a rag to cover them; they shall all feel themselves to be utterly destitute of any one good thing; they shall all be broken down into the depths of soul destitution, so as to feel that they have not a single grain of anything in them by nature that is pure, holy, or acceptable to God. But the Lord has not tracked out a certain path in which every one of the elect shall walk, without deviating from it one hair's breadth. He has prescribed to Himself no one particular mode whereby to bring to pass His own designs; but, in one way or the other, He will take care that all His redeemed family shall be brought into the depths of soul poverty.

Thus some He makes poor by stripping away every false hope; others, by bringing a terrible sentence into their consciences, so as to cut up their self-righteousness; others, by manifesting to them the awful pride, deceit, and hypocrisy of which they have been guilty; others, by holding up before their eyes a long profession of religion without the experience of vital godliness; others, by suffering them to go to the very edge of sin, in order to teach them what desperately wicked hearts they have; others, by allowing them for a time to walk in the base appetites of their fallen nature, that they may know what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God; and others, by leaving them to grapple with powerful temptations, that by learning their weakness and helplessness against them, they may be effectually stripped of all their fancied strength, wisdom, and righteousness.

Spiritual poverty, then, is a miserable feeling of soul emptiness before God, an inward sinking sensation that there is nothing in our hearts spiritually good, nothing which can deliver us from the justly merited wrath of God, or save us from the nethermost hell. And intimately blended with the poignant feelings of guilt and condemnation, there is a spiritual consciousness that there is such a thing enjoyed by the elect as the Spirit of adoption, that there are such sweet realities as divine manifestations, that the blood of Jesus is sprinkled by the Holy Ghost upon the consciences of the redeemed to cleanse them from all guilt and filth. And thus by comparing its own wants with their helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for blessings, and having an inward light wherein the truth of God's Word is seen, and an inward life whereby it is felt, a soul wading in the depths of spiritual poverty, is brought to feel that it must be the manifestation of the light of God's countenance which can alone deliver; that it must be the testimony of God spoken by His own lips to the heart that alone can save; and that the

want of this is the want of everything that can manifest it to be a vessel of mercy here, and fit it for, as well as carry it into, eternal glory and bliss hereafter.

To be poor, then, is to have this wretched emptiness of spirit, this nakedness and destitution of soul before God. Nor is it, perhaps, ever more deeply felt than in the lonely watches of the night, when no eye can see, nor ear hear, but the eye and ear of Jehovah; in these solemn moments of deep recollection, when the stillness and darkness around us are but the counterpart to the stillness and darkness of the soul, he that is spiritually poor often feels how empty he is of everything heavenly and divine—a sinking wretch without a grain of godliness—and without drawing too rigid a line of exclusion, we may unhesitatingly say that he who has never thus known what it is to groan before the Lord with breakings-forth of heart as a needy naked wretch, he that has never felt his miserable destitution and emptiness before the eyes of a heart-searching God, has not yet experienced what it is to be spiritually poor.

2. But there is something more to be known than poverty: we read of "the **oppression** of the poor". Now it is poverty which gives room for oppression. It is so literally and temporally. The rich are not oppressed. Those who have houses and lands, or any other property, are safe from the iron rod of oppression. Their money sets them above its reach. But it is the poor that are oppressed; and the deeper a man's natural poverty is, the more open is he to grinding oppression, and the more helpless and unprotected is he against it. Oppression is the exercise of strength against weakness, the triumph of power over helplessness; so that poverty literally opens the door for oppression.

And as it is literally and naturally, so it is spiritually and supernaturally. Soul poverty opens the door for soul oppression; and no man knows what it is to be spiritually oppressed until he is brought into spiritual poverty. As long as he has any fancied strength, he can resist oppression; as long as he has a stock of imaginary riches, he can keep it at a distance. He is like a rich man naturally, who can laugh at oppression; the length of his purse wards it off; its heavy hand comes not near him; the door has not been thrown open for the grinder to come in upon him. But let this rich man by some sudden reverse sink into the depths of poverty literally, and it opens the door of oppression immediately; and the bowing tradesman who courted him in the days of his prosperity, will be the first to press him down in the days of his adversity.

Thus it is also spiritually. Poverty opens the way for oppression. It was so with Hezekiah. When Hezekiah was laid on his bed of sickness, death stared him in the face, and he expected he should be cut off, and cast into perdition. This opened the door for oppression; says he, "Lord, I am **oppressed**; undertake for me." The cold damps of death stood upon his forehead, and despair pressed upon his soul. All his fleshly religion vanished in a moment; and he had but just faith and strength enough to cry out under the gripe of the oppressor's hand at his throat, "Undertake for me" **Isa 38:14**.

A soul, then, does not know what it is to be burdened, oppressed, and weighed down, till it is brought into spiritual poverty. The law, for instance, laid on a man's conscience, does not sink him down till it first has made him poor; but when he is brought into the depths of soul poverty, so as not to have a single grain of religion, then, when there is the manifestation of God's wrath in his conscience, as Hart says,

"it strikes the dying dead". It is putting a load on him who before was sinking; it is adding oppression to poverty.

So when a man feels that he has not in his heart anything that bears the stamp of vital godliness, **then** to have all his past backslidings laid as an additional load on his conscience, with all the slips and follies that he has been guilty of inwardly and outwardly; **then** to have them all brought up to recollection, and put as a ton-weight upon his sinking soul, it is like a hard-hearted creditor coming with a long bill and a demand of immediate payment upon a poor man who has just turned his pockets out, and not found a penny in them. Poverty and want are bad enough without the old score being brought to view; but oppression is added to poverty when the things that a man has said and done years ago—the sins of childhood, youth, and manhood, transgressions long ago buried in oblivion, are brought to light; and the foolish things, the hypocritical things, the presumptuous things, the daring deceitfulness, the base wantonness of which he has been guilty—are all laid as a heavy load on him who is ready to sink already.

Oppression, then, is a weight and a burden superadded to poverty. It is not the same thing as poverty, but it is an additional affliction to poverty. A man may be poor without being oppressed; but when he is poor and oppressed too, it makes the poverty tenfold greater than before. Thus the Lord, in His dealings with His people in order to bring them down, first strips them and makes them poor; and when He has made them poor, and brought them into the depths of soul destitution, then He causes burdens to lie on them as heavy loads, as though they would sink them into a never-ending hell. But here is the mark of life—the groaning, panting, sighing, and crying of the soul under the burden.

The dead in sin feel nothing; the hypocrites in Zion feel nothing, and those that are at ease in a fleshly religion feel nothing. They may have powerful temptations; they may have alarming fears of going to hell; but as to any heavings up of a quickened conscience under the weight of oppression, as to any pouring out of the heart before God, or any giving vent to the distresses of the soul in sighs and cries unto the Lord to have mercy, to speak peace, and bring in a sweet manifestation of pardon and love, and to keep at this day after day, and night after night, till the Lord appears—these are exercises unknown to the dead, and peculiar to the living family. A man may "cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit" **Isa 65:14**; but as the prophet speaks, "they do not cry unto God **with their heart**, when they howl upon their beds" **Ho 7:14**. But to breathe and pant after the Lord, to groan and sigh because of oppression, to wrestle with the Saviour and give Him no rest until He appears in the soul—this inward work is known only to the elect, and is out of the reach of all who have a name to live while they are dead.

It is the fruit of the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplications into their soul; it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, helping its infirmities, and making intercession in it with groanings which cannot be uttered.

II. "For the sighing of the **needy**." There seems to be a distinction between the poor and the needy, for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost does not use vain repetitions. The expression "poor" has a **negative** meaning, that is, it implies an **absence** of money, a state of destitution; but the expression "needy" has a **positive** meaning, that is, it implies the **presence** of wants and cravings. A man may in some sense be poor without being needy; but he never can be needy without being poor. For instance, we see



sometimes in our villages a poor idiot, clothed in rags; but he knows it not; he has no idea of his state; he has no knowledge of a condition superior to his own, but is content with his poverty. Here, then, is a person who is poor, but not **needy**, because he wants nothing; he has no understanding, no intellect to enter into the numerous wants and cravings that are felt by his parents after better food, or clothing, or wages.

So a man may be **poor** religiously, and yet not be **needy**; that is to say, he may have his eyes opened to see what true religion is, and to know who are the people that have it; he may be convinced that this person is a man of God, and the other person is a child of God, and yet be sensible in his own soul that he himself has no vital religion. There are such persons, I believe, who are quite convinced that they have no vital religion; and yet have none of the cries and sighs, none of the wants, nor the groans, nor the fervent petitions after mercy, which are in a living soul. Nay, are not the quickened vessels of mercy themselves often in that state when they are poor, but not needy—when they are conscious of their barrenness and emptiness of all good, and yet have neither will nor power to lift up a desire, or put up a cry after a blessing?

1. The **needy**, then, is a character who is not merely poor, empty, and naked before God, but who is feelingly in want of spiritual blessings applied to his soul. Some persons can rest on temptations, and take temptations as evidences. Others can build on doubts and fears, and rest on doubts and fears as evidences. Others can take powerful past convictions, or present convictions, and lean on them as evidences. Others can look to a profession of religion, and take that as an evidence.

But a living soul must have heavenly blessings communicated immediately to his heart and conscience from the mouth of God. He must have deliverance manifested to his soul as a reality; he must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on his conscience with divine power, to purge it from filth and dead works; he must have his eyes anointed with eye-salve to see Jesus; yea, his soul pants to be led up into sweet communion with Jesus; he wants to be taken spiritually into fellowship with Christ, that he may see Him with the eyes of his soul, that he may look upon Him whom he has pierced, mourn over Him, and for Him, and with Him, and have some sweet, spiritual, and supernatural manifestation of His dying love to his soul. A nominal Christ will never do for a needy sinner, but it must be the Christ of God made spiritually known by the power of the Holy Ghost, sweetly revealed and coming into his heart with all His blessed efficacy, and shining into his soul like the sun in his strength, beaming forth blessed rays of grace and mercy. Nothing but this will ever satisfy a soul that has life in it.

The distinguishing mark, then, and character of this needy soul is to be full of needs. Day after day he wants divine realities to be revealed to his soul, to hear the sweet voice of mercy speaking into his heart, as from the lips of God Himself, that he is an accepted child, that he may bathe, as it were, in sweet manifestations of the love and mercy of God. In the supply of want he believes the marrow of all true religion and vital godliness to consist. So that he cannot take up with his present state of need for religion. If he is in doubts and fears, or is passing through heavy temptations, and is writing bitter things against himself, he cannot say, "**This** is religion;" but what he wants is something different from what he feels, even the blessed testimonies and manifestations that he is one of the Lord's own dear family: and I am very well assured from soul experience, that

nothing but the application of heavenly blessings to the soul can ever satisfy the man who has had life implanted in his heart by the hand of God Himself.

2. We therefore read of this needy person that he **sighs**: "For the oppression of the poor, for the **sighing** of the needy." He is sighing after God; groaning in the depths of his soul after the lifting up of the light of God's countenance; sighing under the weight of unbelief, the burden of infidelity, the power of temptation, the wretchedness of his heart, the carnality of his mind, the barrenness of his frame, his stupidity, his brutality, filth, and corruption. He is sighing to the Lord under the burden of these things lying as a load on his conscience, and begging the Lord that He would only lift up the light of His countenance, that He would only drop one sweet testimony, that He would speak but one word to his soul, to bring with it sweet deliverance, and lift him out into all the light, and life, and liberty, and peace of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

III. But what read we in answer to these cries? "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, **now will I arise**, saith the Lord." What is the meaning of this expression—"Now will I **arise**, saith the Lord?" It implies that the Lord had been sitting still all the time, looking on, and apparently taking no notice. It is **if I may use without irreverence such a comparison** like a parent sitting in the house, and looking through the window at his child, who is engaged about something in the street. He is watching the child with anxious eye, and observing all its movements, but appears as if he were taking no notice of it. But let the father perceive that child in danger; let him see it approaching the brink of a canal or a pond; still more, let him see it falling into it: the parent starts from his seat, rushes from the house, flies to the brink of the canal or the pond, and pulls

his child out of the water. But he had been watching it all along, observing it through the window, though apparently taking no notice.

So the Lord says, "**Now will I arise:**" as though He had been sitting still, appearing to take no notice, leaving the poor soul to itself, suffering its enemies to grapple with it and beat it down into the dust, apparently indifferent, though watching it all the time, and only waiting for the proper season to interfere. "**Now** will I arise, saith the Lord." As though the time were now come, the set season to favour Zion; as though the special moment were now arrived for the Lord to interfere; the special crisis when He must come forward to help.

Now, the Lord is watching this moment. He says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, **now** will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." The moment is at last come, the blessed time to favour Zion, the predestinated, the eternally appointed season for the Lord to arise from His seat, to come forward to the help of His poor, needy child.

It is this sitting still of the Lord that so baffles, puzzles, perplexes, and troubles God's dear family, If directly they were poor and oppressed, if directly they were needy and sighed, the Lord would appear, it would not so baffle them, it would not so confound them: but it is this which so perplexes and puzzles the Lord's little ones, that He seems to take no notice of them, and that all their cries and sighs and groans and tears appear to have no more effect than if they were addressed to a dead wall; as though the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth never drank in their cries; as though He were as deaf to them as He is to the howlings of the reprobate, or to the blasphemies of the fallen spirits in hell. It is this hiding

Himself behind a thick cloud, this sitting still and taking no notice, nor putting forth His hand to interfere, which so exercises and perplexes God's poor oppressed children.

But He will not be always so. "**Now** will I arise, saith the Lord." A time is fixed when He will "arise" for their help, when He will leave His seat, and come forward to stretch forth His hand, and lift them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and thus bring them into the light of His countenance, and into the sweet enjoyment of a full, free, and glorious salvation.

IV. "Now will I arise, saith the Lord; **I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.**" This opens up another part of the experience of God's dear children. We have thus far read of their being poor, and of their being oppressed in their poverty; we have found that they are needy too, and have heard their sighs under their necessity; and the Lord has promised to arise. But now there is another window thrown open to cast light into this dark room; another door is opened into this mysterious chamber of inward experience. We read of one "that **puffeth** at him." Thus we find that the character in our text is not merely "poor" and "oppressed," but also "puffed at." Here an enemy, a personal antagonist is pointed out—"from **him** that puffeth at him."

But this description applies to several characters—in fact to every character, be it a sinner, be it a saint, or be it the devil, that puffs at the poor child of God.

1. **Satan** then is one that puffs at the poor child of God, when he is passing through this oppression, and when he is sighing under this deep poverty. And what is contained in the idea of puffing? It implies a breath coming, a blast rushing forth. When the Holy Ghost teaches a vessel of mercy He

teaches him by blessed inspiration. He breathes light, and life, and liberty, and peace into his soul. Thus it is also with this counterblast, this opposite work to that of the Holy Ghost. When the devil seeks to work on the carnal mind of a living child, he puffs into him what I may call "a black inspiration." There is a divine inspiration from the Holy Ghost, breathing into the soul the light, life, and love of heaven; and there is a black inspiration from Satan, breathing into the carnal mind the darkness blasphemy, and enmity of hell.

The child of God, then, who is poor and oppressed, needy and sighing, is exposed to these puffs, these blasts from hell, which, as they roll forth into his carnal mind, spread themselves over it, and cover it with darkness and gloom. It is like a thick fog resting on the top of the chalk downs just by; or a dense cloud of smoke issuing forth from a furnace, that wraps up every object from view. Were we in the midst of that thick mist, or that dense smoke, we should see nothing out of it. So when Satan breathes his black inspiration into the carnal mind, this puff from the infernal regions fills it with that enmity, that malice, that blasphemy which Satan himself feels; and he puffs at the poor child of God in order to fill him with confusion **Job 10:15**, darken his evidences, becloud his prospects, and set on fire all the enmity of his fallen nature, that he may be agitated with a measure of that restless misery with which Satan's own devilish nature is tossed continually.

Now the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." He shall not always be a poor, wretched, oppressed creature that the devil shall puff at, and fill his carnal mind with his own infernal wrath and enmity. "I will arise," saith the Lord, "and set him in safety." And how does He set him in safety but by bringing him into His own blessed

presence? Satan cannot come in there; he is thrown back; he never can come beyond a certain spot. Wherever the presence of the Lord is manifested, it drives Satan back to hell whence he came; and thus the Lord sets His poor child "in safety from him that puffeth at him," by bringing him into His own presence, filling his soul with life and light and liberty, and thus beating back Satan into his infernal den.

2. But the word goes further than this. **Sinners** also puff at God's children, especially professing sinners; that is, sinners who are dead in a profession. These, who are always at ease in Zion, and are never troubled with inward condemnation or the devil's temptations, when they see a poor child of God in distress of mind, or destitute of that assurance and confidence which they believe themselves to be possessed of, are sure to puff at him. The word "puff" implies contempt. It was a custom among the Jews to puff at a person with their lips, as an expression of contempt, as if he were not worth a puff, or as if he were a breath, and no more. Thus we read **Ps 10:5**, "As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them," that is with contempt. So those who are dead in a profession will sometimes puff at God's people, as though they would say, "All your religion is only a puff of breath." And when they see a poor child of God in distress of soul, then, never having passed through the same experience, they puff at this poor exercised creature as though they would puff him away.

But the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." That is, "I will bring him into that blessed spot where all these contemptuous expressions shall fall on him with no more injury than a puff of wind on a man's face. I will set him in safety by giving him such a blessed assurance of his standing in Christ, that all the puffs of his enemies shall not drive him from his hope."

3. But again, **saints** can puff as well as sinners. O the vanity, the pride, the arrogance, the presumption, the hypocrisy, the self-esteem, which are to be found in God's children! Such self-exaltation, and such puffing even against the real family of God! Those who are in bondage will puff at those in liberty, and those in liberty at those in bondage; the strong will blow their suspicions at the weak, and the weak will breathe their doubts against the strong; the deep-experienced will puff at the shallowness of the less deeply taught, and the shallow-experienced will puff at the inconsistencies of the deep-experienced. Pride and ignorance furnish on both sides ample materials for this contest of puffs. Nor can anything stop this windy battle but love and humility.

Now the Lord says, "I will **set him in safety** from him that puffeth at him." It is a remarkable expression. The Lord does not say, "I will deliver him," but "I will put him into a safe spot." Now the very puffing of the saints of God against us, the Lord makes use of to put us into this safe spot. When those who are esteemed children of God puff at others of the living family, and it leads them to heart-searching, soul exercise, and crying to the Lord to make their hearts right before Him; when it brings them to the Lord in real trouble of mind, in true poverty of spirit, and stirs them up to supplicate His mercy and His grace, and that He would lift up the light of His countenance upon them; they are already set in safety. That is a very safe spot to be in—to be sighing and crying unto the Lord, that He would look down on them in mercy. Thus the Lord, when His poor children are puffed at, will often make this very puffing useful to them by causing them to pass through sharp exercises of soul, and in them to cry, "Search me, O Lord, and try me; and see if there be any wicked way in me."



But the word carries with it another sense. There is the puff of **flattery**. A saint, like the man in the fable, can sometimes blow hot as well as cold; and there are those among the living family who can puff up some brethren with the breath of applause, as well as puff at others with the blast of bitterness and contempt. Nay, they generally go together, for the same spirit that leads a man unduly to condemn some, will lead him unduly to exalt others. Now when one child of God gets his mouth to the ear of another, and begins to puff his flatteries into his mind, it does him ten times more harm than if he puffed his enmity at him. The margin, therefore, reads, from him "that would ensnare him;" and where is there a greater snare than flattery? I have been in both spots, and have had the puff of flattery and the puff of contempt, and can testify from personal experience that the one is far more dangerous than the other. The strongest puffs of bitterness and wrath **and I have had a good share of them from saints, as well as sinners** have done me less injury than the lightest breath of flattery and applause.

But whatever be the puff, the Lord can put us into a safe spot. "I will put him in safety from him that puffeth at him." And the safe spot that He puts him into is, to make these flatteries hateful to his soul; to give him such a sense of his own dreadful filth and folly, as to make him reject these flatteries with hatred, and to cry to the Lord for His sweet and blessed testimonies in his conscience. The Lord positively declares, "I will put him in safety from him that puffeth at him," whatever that puff may be.

But the place of safety is not always the spot where we think safety is. For instance, a mother might see her child walking on the roof of a house. O, if her maternal bosom could speak! If she had the power, she would fly to the top of the house and bring the child to the ground. The ground in that

case, not the roof of the house, is the place of safety, and to reach it, the truant urchin must be brought **down**. But, on the other hand, if the child were down in a well, the same fond anxiety and maternal love which would prompt her to fly to the top of the roof, would prompt her to fly down the well and bring the child up in her arms. The ground is still the place of safety, but in this case the child must be brought **up** to it. Apply this spiritually. When one child of God puffs up another with flattery, it is setting him to walk on the roof of a house. It is the spot of danger; and his heavenly Parent removes him to the place of safety, by bringing him down. Again, when a child of God is puffed at as being a hypocrite, and this breath of suspicion, mingling with his own doubts and fears, sinks him into despondency, the same kind, heavenly Parent lifts him up out of despair, by raising him up with a smile of His countenance.

Expect, friends, to be puffed at; to be puffed at by saints, to be puffed at by sinners, to be puffed at by the devil. Never expect to pass through life, no, not for a week, without being puffed at; some puff of enmity, some puff of contempt, or some puff of flattery. But the Lord says, "I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him." And when the Lord is pleased to indulge us with some testimony that our hearts are right before Him, and to favour us with some discovery of His goodness and mercy—He sets us most effectually in safety from him that puffeth at us.

We see, then, the path which the Lord has traced out for the living soul to walk in. But what a trying, mysterious path it is! What cutting work, for instance, is it to awake at midnight, and feel as if you had not a grain of godliness in your soul; to be oppressed, and have all your sins brought to mind, and laid as a heavy burden on your conscience! Who would walk in this path? I know I would not. What I should like is to sit

quietly and prayerfully in my arm-chair, and for the Lord to pour His religion into my soul, just as I pour a tumbler of water down my throat. But the Lord says, "No; it shall come, but it shall come in My channel, not yours. Through much tribulation you shall enter the kingdom." And who would be needy, who would go groaning about the fields from day to day, or about the house, asking the Lord to apply the blood of atonement to his soul?—who wants to walk in that path? Would it not be sweeter, according to our apprehension, to go at once to the Bible, and to get it from the Bible? But to have to get it from the Lord with heart labour, with many groans and sighs, and then, after all our begging, to get scarcely a drop—why, what a strange, mysterious path this is to walk in!

And to be puffed at!—to have the devil puffing his blasphemies into our carnal mind; to have those who are dead in a profession, whom we know to be in the broad way to hell, puffing their contempt at us; and to have even some of the children of God puffing at us too—who would choose to walk in this path? No man in his senses. But God makes His people out of their senses before they can walk in it; I mean to say, out of their senses, not literally, but so far as spiritual things are concerned. And then He arises for their help, and brings them into that blessed spot where alone they find real safety; the path of contrition and humility, the path of living communion with Christ, hid in the hollow of His hand from pride and presumption, from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the arrow that flieth at noonday.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." Lord, fulfil Thy word. Thou hast said, "Now will I arise." O that this may be the blessed season when Thou wilt arise and set us in safety from all that puff at us!