

AN EXCITING ENQUIRY.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying,
Who is this?” — Matthew 21:10.*

OH, that something would move this great city of ours! I am afraid that at least one-third of our population is settling down in stolid indifference to all religion. It is not that there are thousands of professed infidels, but without making the profession of being so, infidels they really are. It is not that they hate the gospel,-they do not care to hear it, or to know what it teaches. They have not enough interest in it to enter the sanctuary even for once in their lives, unless influenced by fashion or by fear they may attend some ceremonial observance. I think we can hardly form a conception of the fearful heathenism of this great metropolis. You might go down street after street, and find that the larger proportion of the people, so far from making any profession of religion, did not even enter a place of worship, and knew nothing more than what the city missionary or the Bible-woman may have been helped to teach them. We are getting into a very, very, very sad state of things; we want something or other that will get *at* the masses, and constrain the city to be moved.

The theater services which have been lately attempted have no doubt proved a great blessing; the opening of cathedrals was a step in the right direction; but everybody can see that the effect of such departures from the ordinary routine is naturally transient. There will be no greater attraction in a theater than there will be in a chapel or church, if the same gospel is preached, after the novelty of its having been preached there shall have worn off. We can no more expect to see cathedrals crowded long together now than we might have expected it twenty years ago. The thing is good as

an expedient, but it must be temporary in its results. We shall want something greater than this before we shall get at the masses of London. This is only, as it were, a little hammer; we want a hammer more massive than that of Thor to strike this island, to make it shake from end to end. When you have three millions of people herded together, you cannot move them by simply opening half-a-dozen theatres, or by crowding a cathedral, or by filling some large place of worship.

What a hopeful sign it would be even if people were excited against religion! Really, I would sooner that they intelligently hated it than that they were stolidly indifferent to it. A man who has enough thought about him to oppose the truth of God is a more hopeful subject than the man who does not think at all. We cannot do anything with logs; we feel that we could brace up our nerves to the charge amidst men possessed with devils while we have the gospel to cast the devils out. It is when men have no spirit at all, but are simply dull, lumpish, thoughtless logs, that we cannot get on with them. For my part, I do not regret the activity of Puseyism and Popery just now. Though I dread it as an awful evil in itself, I am thankful for everything that will relieve the awful stillness of religious stagnation. If it will only stir us up to oppose it, if it will only make the true Protestant spirit of England come out, I shall be grateful for the sanitary results, however much I deplore the devastating pestilence. We want something that shall again rouse this city, and move it from end to end.

I. The text seems to me to tell us what will do it. WHAT IS THAT WHICH WILL STIR THE WHOLE OF LONDON, AS IT STIRRED JERUSALEM? A reigning Savior riding in triumph. Jesus Christ never moved Jerusalem till he mounted on that ass, till they caste their garments in the pathway, and strewed the branches, and cried, "Hosanna!" Then it was, as he rode in triumph as King of the Jews, that the whole city was stirred. Oh, that we had a reigning Savior more distinctly recognized in all our churches! There is no use in mincing matters or hiding our shame. The shout of a King is not in the midst of the church at large. The ancient glory which rested upon the Lord's chosen has in a great measure departed. Write ye Ichabod, for the glory is departed. We have not now the lighting down of the mighty arm, nor the strength of a present God, — as once we had. The world knows very little about the church, and cares very little about her, so long as Christ does not reign in her palaces. Unfurl the King's flag, proclaim his entry, make known his residence, and forthwith, "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and

against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and caste away their cords from us.”

What was that church which disturbed the dark ages? Why, a church made up of men who hazarded their lives unto the death, — men who stood up and preached in the dead of night to the few who were bold enough to gather to hear them—men who at other times could beard the tyrant, and stand face to face with cardinal or pope, and speak the truth, come what might. These were men who had a reigning Savior in their midst; yet, few and feeble, that gallant host subdued the world. The Vatican trembled; the words they spake, sustained by the character they bore, fell like thunderbolts about it. Would you enquire, my brethren, for the simple but saintly servants of God who brought a Reformation into England? They were men who recognized a reigning Savior. The church was represented by those in whose hearts Jesus Christ really did dwell,—such men as Wycliffe and his successors. From market-place to market-place they went, with but half pages or whole pages of the Word of God, as fast as they could be printed; they read them at the market-cross; they went on from place to place, preaching the pure, unadulterated gospel, in homely language, with fiery tongues, and soon they set all England in a blaze.

And who were they in later days, in the last century, who awoke the slumbering church? They were men who had Christ reigning in them; such men as Whitefield and the Wesleys,—men who bowed before the royal dignity of Jesus, and said, —

*Shall we, for fear of feeble men,
The Spirit's course in us restrain?”*

Awed by no mortals frown, would they smooth their tongues and fashion their words to win human esteem? On the hill-tops, in the churchyards, by the roadsides, anywhere, everywhere, they unfurled the banner of a reigning Savior, and straightway the darkness of England gave place to glorious light. And now, could we only get the Church of God to awake, we should soon have the whole city moved. Let our ministers preach the gospel, or let them preach it with something like force; instead of treating us to moral essays and elaborately-prepared discourses, let them speak their hearts out in such words as God would give them on the occasion; let the members of the church back them up by vehement zeal, earnest prayer, and incessant labors; we should want nothing else to stir this city from end to end. Oh, to see the Savior riding in the midst, and to hear the

acclamations, while joyous converts shout, like the young children of old, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The old attractions of the cross have not departed. You cannot preach Christ and not get a congregation. Be it "the Christ" whom you preach honestly and preach fully, the people must come to hear. Though they hate and loathe the truth, they will come again to hear it. They will turn on their heel, and say, "We cannot bear it;" but the next time the doors are opened they will be there. The gospel gets them by the ear and holds them. It has a secret, mysterious influence even over the hearts that do not receive it, to compel them at least to lend their ear to the hearing of it. Let the church, then, awake; and that influence shall be had whereby the whole city shall be moved.

But when we speak of the church, I am afraid we often hide our own sins under a declaration against the church. Why, *we* are the church. Christian men and women, *you* are the church. You must, not tie the church up like a quivering victim, and lash her; tie yourself up, and let the lash fall on your own shoulders. If you and I had a reigning Christ in our hearts, we should help to move the city. Do you ask what I mean by that? I do not mean the way in which some of you show the quality of your faith by the quantity of its fruits. Your convictions and your conversion assume a very mild form. You keep them well in check; you have got a tight rein on the motions of the heart; your religion never runs wild,-never! you are such a prudent brother; *you* will never be guilty of anything like enthusiasm, no one will ever chalk the word "Fanatic" on your back. You will never move the city, my friend,-no fear of it. While appeals, which ought to make your heart burn, freeze on your ears, you will never move the city. While themes which ought to bow you to the earth in humility of spirit, and then lift you up as on eagles' wings in rapture of delight, affect you not at all; unimpressible as stone, you will never move the city. But if you and I felt, that the things we believed were of the first and last importance, that they were worth living for, and worth dying for, that there was nothing else, in fact, in all the world that was worth any care or thought except these things, then, beloved, we should soon see the city moved. One earnest Christian fully given up to his Master, one soul perfectly devoted to Christ, is of more worth in soul-winning and in world-conquering than fifty thousand of the mere professors. You know how it used to be in the olden wars. The rank and file all did service in their way; but it was the one man who made the corner of the triangle to break the enemy's ranks, and

gathered all the spears into his own bosom,-it was *he* who won the victory. The man who dashed foremost with his battle-axe and slew the foe, and gave courage to all the trembling ones behind,-the man who told them that victory was sure to wait on courage, and who dashed an against fearful odds,-he was the man who made his country famous. And we want such Christians nowadays, those who know no fear, do not believe in defeat, and are animated with the assurance that the Most High God is with us, and who will go on, and on, and on, conquering and to conquer.

You see, it is a *reigning* Christ who moves the city, Christ riding in the heart in a glorious procession of gladsome acclamation,-it is this that will be the great thing to stir even London's stolid masses.

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE, WHEN STIRRED, WILL ASK THE QUESTION, "WHO IS THIS?" and it will be an unfortunate thing if you who are with Christ should not be able to give an answer. Some of you, whose hearts are, I hope, right towards him, are scarcely attentive enough to that precept, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I do deprecate above all things your getting your creed from me,-your building your creed upon the fact that the preacher has said so-and-so. We want Bible students as Christians,-men who not only believe the truth, but have good reasons for believing it; men who can meet error with the argument, "It is written," and can maintain the truth at all hazards, using weapons taken from the armoury of God's inspired Book. Oh, that we had among us more who were fit to be teachers! But, alas! I am afraid we shall have to say of many you, as Paul said of the weak ones in his day, that, when they ought to have been teachers, they were still only learners; and when they should have been, breaking the bread of life to others, they were themselves still needing to be fed upon milk. I hope that will not be the case with us. May we grow in grace; so that, when the question is asked, "Who is this?" we may be able to answer it.

Beloved, is it your desire to do good to your fellow-man? Have you a longing in your soul to be the means of bringing others to Christ? In order to accomplish this, it is imperatively necessary that you should have a knowledge of Jesus. Let it be a heart knowledge. You tell your children sometimes to learn their lessons by heart. You cannot learn Christ in any other way. Christ cannot be learned in the head. Love only can learn love; and Christ is love incarnate. It is by loving him, and communing with him,

that you will get to understand him. You must learn him by heart. Then you must learn him experimentally. I would not give anything for an answer to my anxious enquiries from a mere theoretical person. Could I not read the Book, and get at the theory myself? I want to be taught by one who has tasted and handled the things of which he speaks. Dear brethren in Christ, seek to know Jesus by living upon him. Drink ye of his blood; eat ye of his flesh; be you in constant communion with him, till your vital union with his person shall transcend your faith by a constant joyful experience. Know Christ experimentally.

Endeavour also to know Christ, beloved, by being taught of his spirit. That learning of Christ that we get from human wit is of little worth; it is the revelation of Christ in us by the Holy Ghost which alone is true knowledge. John Bunyan used to say that he preached only such truths as the Lord had burnt into him. Oh, may he burn these truths into you! May he be pleased to write upon the tablets of your heart the story of your Master, so that, when any shall say, "Who is this?" you may not need to pause for a single moment, or to ask any divine to assist you in the answer, —

*"But gladly tell to sinners round
what a dear Savior you have found."*

III. THIS ENQUIRY ABOUT CHRIST SHOULD ALWAYS BE MET WITH A CLEAR AND DISTINCT ANSWER.

If I had only one more sermon to preach before I died, I know what it should be about: it should be about my Lord Jesus Christ; and I think that, when we get to the end of our ministry, one of our regrets will be, that we did not preach more of him. I am sure no minister will ever repent of having preached him too much. You who are with Jesus, talk much about him, and let that talk be very plain. Tell sinners that "God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and his disciples beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Tell them that he came to this earth as a Substitute for his people, that his holy life is accounted their righteousness, that his sufferings and death constitute a complete atonement, and appease the wrath of God for all their sins. Never let an opportunity be lost of telling out the doctrine of substitution. That is the core of the gospel; the sinner in Christ's place, and Christ in the sinner's place; our debts to God paid by Christ; the chastisement of our peace laid upon him, that we may have the peace through his chastisement.

I wish to put this matter very earnestly to my dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, and especially to you who are in church-fellowship here. Do on every occasion, and especially when you get but half an invitation to do so,—do speak out, concerning the person of Christ as God and man, concerning the work of Christ as taking human guilt and suffering for it, concerning the worth of that work as being able to take away all manner of sin and blasphemy. Tell it to the very chief of sinners, that the blood of Christ can make them clean; tell it to the drunkard, the harlot, the thief, the murderer. Tell them all that whosoever believeth in him is not condemned; and never, from fear or through shame, refuse to give an answer to so hopeful an enquiry as this, — “Who is this?”

And what shall I say to *you who are moved by curiosity to ask this question*, “Who is this?” I daresay there were some in Jerusalem who were so busy with their shops that they did not enquire, “Who is this?” “Oh!” they would say, “We need not go across the threshold to see what a mob may be doing in the street—a lot of children calling out ‘Hosanna,’ and a number of idle gossips following a silly fellow as he rides upon an ass through the street; that is all it is.” Other people doubtless had a little of the bump of curiosity; they could not help enquiring. So they come into the street, they stand among the crowd, and they say to one, “Who is this?” “I don’t know,” says he, “I am come to see for myself.” “But who is this?” they repeat again and again; and they very likely got six wrong answers before they get the right. They push on, and at last they get a good standing-place, — perhaps climb up into a tree, as Zacchaeus did; and there they are, all wide awake, trying to get an answer to the question, “Who is this?”

Well, I hope some such curiosity as this may be in your mind; at any rate, I had it in my mind once, and I believe there are many who now have it. I will tell you the occasions upon which this curiosity is often excited. A laboring man has been in the habit of working with another who was often intoxicated, an habitual swearer, and perhaps even prone at times to blaspheme. On a sudden, he sees him a changed character, steady in all his conduct, affectionate, thoughtful of his wife and children, industrious, and withal he is religious. What an alteration! Can it fail to cause enquiry? Or he calls in at the house of a neighbor, and finds that neighbor very sick and ill; he is a working man with a large family, and it would be a very serious thing for him to die, and leave those little ones; but he sits up in the bed, and he tells his friend that he has not any care at all about these matters, he

has left them all with God; he says, "I used to fret and worry myself, but now, whether I live or die, I leave all with God; I am perfectly resigned to his will; Christ is with me here; and I find it —

*“Sweet to lie passive in his hands,
And know no will but his.”*

“Oh,” says the man, “who *is* this that has made such a difference in my neighbour?” What can be the cause, of this change? What can be the reason of this? He watches another; he persecutes him, jeers and laughs at him, casts all manner of threats and insinuations at him. He sees him bear it all very quietly; he knows that he cannot, tempt him to do what is wrong, though he tries hard to do it; the path of integrity is trodden year after year, and the worldly man looking on cannot make it out. He says, “Who is this?” He sees another, a very happy, lively, earnest, joyful Christian. “Well,” thinks this man, “I have to go to the theater to get any fun, I must be in company, and I must drink a certain quantity before I can get my spirits up; but here is a man cheerful and bright without any of these things. He is poor, but he is happy; he has got a fustian jacket, but he has not got a fustian heart; he’s ‘as happy as a king;’ his soul is merry within him; I can’t make it out — ‘Who is this?’” These things stir men’s curiosity, and I hope, dear friends, you will try to make people more and more curious by this plan. And how often a holy deathbed stirs that curiosity! As the expiring believer shouts victory, or sinks to his rest with perfect joy, the worldling looks on, and says, “Who *is* this? I can’t comprehend it, I can’t make it out.”

Now, it is little wonder, my dear friends, that there should be some curiosity to know about Christ. There ought to be a great deal more. Consider that God himself speaks to you by Christ. Shall God speak, and shall mortal man not care to hear what God says? Shall God speak to me by his dear Son, and shall I have no ear to hear the Divine Word? I ought to be anxious to know it. Christ was spoken of by prophets,—Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah,—all of them spoke of Christ. Were there all those testimonies about him, and shall not I care to know of him? When he came upon earth, it was with songs of angels, and a new star was launched forth to welcome his birth; have I no curiosity to know of him? I understand that his person is complex, that he is at once God and man,—a strange, wonderful Person this! do I not wish to know more of him? I find that he died, and that he rose again, and that there is a close connection between

his dying and rising again, and the forgiveness of our sins and the justification of our souls; do I not want to know about that? Christ has come to solve the most tremendous problem, come to tell us of life beyond the grave, of immortality when corruption shall have done its work; have I no curiosity about this? The bleeding Savior, hanging on the cross, says to every man here who has any curiosity in his nature, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." I commend the curiosity that would make you know more of Jesus Christ. Study this blessed Book much.

Pry into those mysteries which speak much of him, and do, oh do press forward till you have got an answer to that question, "Who is this?"

There may be, in this house of prayer, *some who are in positive ignorance asking the question*, "Who is this?" I think we ought not to take it for granted that all our congregation understand the gospel, for they do not. The simple command, "Believe and live," which God has written so plainly in the Bible, is not understood by a great many of our hearers. I sometimes get letters from those who have heard the gospel preached here which astound me. The way in which my correspondents look at things seems conclusive that they have never read the Bible; they imagine that my preaching and everybody else's should be altered, in order to suit some whim and fancy of theirs. The ignorance pointed at in the text was strange; for Christ had lived in Jerusalem, and had been there working miracles, yet the people said, "Who is this?" And Jesus Christ is preached in the very street where you live; you can hear of him out of doors if you like, in the ministry of some open-air preacher; the city missionary will tell you about him; there is a Testament to be had for twopence; everybody may know about Jesus Christ; and yet there are a great many who do not know about him.

But is not ignorance of Jesus Christ in this age wilful? Those who do not know of Jesus Christ now have nobody but themselves to blame. Let me remind you that this ignorance is very damaging; you lose by it much joy and comfort here below, beside the risks of the hereafter. Ignorance of Jesus Christ will be fatal to your soul's welfare. You may not know how to read; but if you know Christ, you shall "read your title clear to mansions in the skies." It is a bad thing for a man not to know a little of all sciences, but a man may go to heaven well enough if he knows only the science of Christ crucified. Not to know Jesus will shut you out of heaven, though

you had all the degrees of all the universities in the world appended to your name. Ignorance of him who is the Savior of sinners is ignorance of the remedy for your soul's disease, ignorance of the key which unlocks heaven's gate, ignorance of him who can kindle the lamp of life in the sepulchres of death. Oh, I pray you, if you have been hitherto ignorant of the Savior, be not satisfied till you know him!

And when I speak of ignorance of Christ, I do not mean ignorance of his name, and of the fact that there is such a Person; I refer more especially to that spiritual ignorance which is so common even among the best informed. Nine persons out of ten who go to place of worship do not know the meaning of the Savior shedding his blood for the remission of sin. If you press them to tell you how it is that Christ saves, they will tell you that he did something or other by which God is able to forgive sin. Though the grand fact that Christ was actually punished in the room, place, and stead of his chosen people, is a fact as clear in the Scripture as noonday, they do not see it. The doctrine of general redemption — that Christ died-for the damned in hell, and suffered the torment of those who afterwards are tormented far ever,-seems to me to be detestable, subversive of the whole gospel, and destructive of the only pillar upon which our hopes can be built. Christ stood in the stead of his elect; for them he made a full atonement; for them he so suffered that not a sin of theirs shall ever be laid at their door. As the Father's love embraced them, so the death of his Son reconciled them.

And who are these that are thus redeemed from among men? They are those who believe in Jesus Christ. This definition is not more simple than conclusive to those to whom the work of the Spirit of God is intelligible. If you do put your trust in him, it is evident that Christ died for you in a way and manner in which he never died for Judas; he died for you so vicariously that the offenses you have committed were imputed to him, and not to you, and therefore your sins are forgiven you. If you trust him, you cannot be punished for your sins, for Christ was punished for them. How can debts be demanded of you that were paid originally by your Savior? You are clear. The Master said, "If ye seek me, let these go their way;" *See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 2,368, "The Living Care of the Dying Christ;" and No. 2,616, "Christ's Care of His Disciples."* and when they seized Jesus, they let his chosen people go. You are clear; before God's bar you are clear. Nobody can lay anything to your charge if you trust in Jesus Christ, for he suffered in your stead. Ignorance of that

great fundamental truth of the whole gospel keeps thousands in darkness. It is the great ball and chain upon the leg of many spiritual prisoners; and if they did but know that, and could spell “substitution” without a mistake, they would very soon come into perfect joy and liberty.

Once more. *It is thought that the expression, “Who is this?” was a contemptuous one on the part of many.* They said, “What next, eh? We have heard of all sorts of excitements and noises, what next? Here is a man who has not where to lay his head; yet he is riding like a king. Here is a man who wears the common smock-frock of a Galilean peasant, and there are people spreading their garments in the way, and strewing branches of trees before him! What next, and what next?” Peradventure with scornful tone some said, “Well, what *shall* we live to see? the King of the Jews! Ah! King of the Jews! Yes, very likely! His father and mother are with us; is this the poor carpenter’s son? King of the Jews, forsooth!” And so they just sneered, and turned away. Yes; but, friends, stop a bit. Some persons who sneer deserve to be sneered at; but we will not treat you so.

It cannot be, after all, such a very fine and wise thing to sneer at the Savior, when you recollect that the angels do not sneer, and never did sneer at him. They came with him when first he descended into Bethlehem’s manger; they came with joyous songs on that memorable night when he was born of the Virgin. Did they not sing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”? Do not sneer where angels sing. When he afterwards retired, in an hour of terrible sorrow, to the garden of Gethsemane, where great drops of blood fell on the ground, the angels came and strengthened him. Round the bloody tree they watched, and wondered how the Lord of glory thus could die; and when he went into the grave, methinks they hung their harps awhile in silence. This we know that, when, on the third day, he burst the bands of death, one of them came to roll away the stone, and two others sat—the one at the foot, the other at the head, — where Jesus had lain; and when the forty days had been accomplished, and he went up to his abode, —

*“They brought his chariot from above,
To bear him to his throne;
Clapp’d their triumphant wings, and cied,
‘The glorious work is done.’”*

In heaven they cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” The mightiest archangel in glory counts it his honor to fly on Jesus Christ’s errands.

Sneer not, then. What is there to sneer at? These spirits are at least as wise as you. Pause awhile, and “kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.”

Do you not care for angels? Then listen: do not sneer, for there are as wise men as you who have not sneered at Christ. You mention some great man who was a scoffer. Ah, well, so it may be, for great men are not always wise; but, on the other hand, what Newton believed in, what Locke trusted in, what Milton sang of, what a Bunyan could dream of in Bedford Gaol, cannot be quite such a contemptible thing after all. I might quote some names at which you could not and would not sneer. You would think yourself unknown and base indeed if you called them unknown and ignoble. The name which these men, great even in your esteem, thought worthy of their highest reverence, surely you need not be so fast to reproach. Come, my friend, search thou also into this problem. Give thy wit a little exercise upon this question, “Who is this?” Seek to know who and what Christ is, and whether he is not a suitable Savior for thee.

Do not affect to be contemptuous, for, after all, if you look after it, there is nothing to despise. What is the gospel story? It is this, that though you are the enemy of Christ, Christ is no enemy of yours. Here is the story, that, while we were yet his enemies, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. I could never despise a man who loved his enemy, and if I saw him come to die to save another, and that other his foe, I could not despise him. I might think him unwise, and think the price of his fair life too dear to buy the wretch for whom he died, but I could not despise his love. Oh, there is something so majestic in Christ’s love that you cannot sneer at it! Uncurl that lip now. He dies not for himself in any sense; he bleeds for his friends, nay, more, for his foes. His dying prayer *See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 897, “The First Cry from the Cross;” and No. 2,236, “Christ’s Plea for Ignorant Sinners;” and No. 3,068, “Unknown Depths and Heights.”* is, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;” and even when his friends forsook him, his last thoughts were all for them. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. There is nothing to sneer at here. He casts aside his glory, hangs his azure mantle on the sky, and takes the rings from off his fingers to hang them up for stars, and down he comes, and is born a feeble child. In his mother’s lap he lies. He lives so poverty-stricken that he has not where to lay his head; and when the fox went to its burrow, and the bird to its nest, he went to the lone mountain, and his locks were wet with

the dews of night. "Give me to drink," he says, as he sits upon the well of Samaria. He is forsaken, despised, and rejected of men; and when he dies, even God himself leaves him. Jesus cries, "Why hast, thou forsaken me?" And all this was because of his strong, all-conquering love for the sons of men. You cannot despise this Man. I would love the Savior, even if he had not died for me. I could not help it. Such love as his must have my heart, such disinterested giving up of all for the sake of those who hated him must claim our heart's affections.

Do not despise him, let me again say to you, for you do not know but that one day you may the where he is. Oh, if you knew that he would wash you in his precious blood, and make you clean; if you knew that he would cast his robe of righteousness about you; if you knew that, he would take you up to be with him, and put the palm-branch in your hand, and make you sing for ever of victory through his precious blood, you would not despise him! And yet that *shall* be the portion of all of you if you believe of him, if you cast yourselves on his finished work. Where he is, there you shall be, and you shall see his face. Do not despise him, the sinner's Friend. Can you dislike him, the Lover of your soul? How can you refuse to be a lover of him? Shedding his tears over you, shedding his blood for you, how can you do otherwise than cast yourselves at his feet?

Despise him not, lastly, for he is coming again in pomp and glory. Speak not lightly of him who is at the door. He is coming, perhaps, while I talk of these great matchless things. Soon may he come into our midst, but he will come with rainbow wreath and clouds of storm. He will come sitting on the great white throne, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. Do not despise him now, for you will not be able to despise him then. Will you do now what you cannot do then? Oh, what a different tale will some men, tell when Christ comes! How those who called him foul names will hide their fouler faces! Come up now, do not play the coward, come up now, and spit in his face again, ye villains, that once did it in his lifetime. Come now, and nail him to the tree again; Judas, come and give him a kiss, as once thou didst! Do you see them? Why, they fly! They hide their heads. They do not any longer despise and reject him, but their cry is, "Rocks, fall on us, and hide us." "Ye mountains, open your bowels, and give us a place of concealment." But it cannot be; the Lamb's eyes of love have become the Lion's eyes of fire, and her that was meek and gentle has now become fiery and terrible. The voice that once was sweet as music, is now loud and terrible as the crash of thunder; and he that once dealt out

mercy, now deals out bolts of vengeance. Oh, despise not him who shall so soon come in his glory! Bow ye now, and “kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” Ask, “Who is he?” and when you put the question, answer it yourself, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.” Trust Jesus Christ, sinner, and you shall know who he is; and he, knowing who you are, will save you with a great salvation. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LAMENTATIONS 3:52-58.

52-55. *Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.*

He said, “I am cut off,” yet he called upon the name of the Lord out of the low dungeon into which his enemies had cast him. What a mercy it is that God’s servants are often as graciously inconsistent as Jeremiah was just then! They are afraid that the Lord will not hear them, yet they continue to pray unto him. They are afraid that they are cast off for ever, yet they will still use the privilege of a child of God, and cry unto him, though they doubt whether they have a child’s right to do so. Go on, beloved, with that blessed inconsistency, and the Lord will bless you in it.

56. *Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.*

Is not that a beautiful description of prayer, when the soul cannot find words, nothing but a “breathing”? Did I say nothing but a breathing? Why, that is the very essence of prayer.

***“Prayer is the breath of God in man,
Returning whence it came.”***

Vocal sounds in prayer can be given forth by hypocrites. Our children have their dolls or their little animals that they press to make them squeak, but there is no life in them; so there may be a sound, yet no life, but I never heard of anything that really breathed, and yet had not life. And when your soul breathes itself out before God in prayer, although it cannot utter any

articulate sound by reason of the sorrow of your heart, there is spiritual life in you.

57. *Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1,812 "A Wonder Explained by Greater Wonders."*

Oh, sweet experience! Cannot you, beloved, say that these words suit you as much as they did Jeremiah? I am inclined to say to him, "They are mine, Jeremiah, they certainly were yours, but I am sure that they are equally mine."

57, 58. *Thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life. See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 579, "God Pleading for Saints, and Saint Pleading for God."*

Blessed be his holy name for ever and ever!