

A String Of Pearls

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that believers, though strangers and sojourners in this world, are richly comforted by God's abundant mercy, their new birth into a living hope, and the assurance of an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-5, John 3:3, Romans 5:20, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Divine Mercy", "Regeneration", "Christian Hope"

Description

In 'A String Of Pearls,' C.H. Spurgeon offers a rich devotional meditation on 1 Peter 1:3-5, emphasizing God's abundant mercy and the believer's new birth into a living hope. He encourages Christians to find comfort in their heavenly inheritance and the sustaining power of faith through trials. Spurgeon's vivid imagery and pastoral heart bring deep encouragement to those feeling like strangers in this world, reminding them of their true citizenship in heaven.

Transcript

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"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:3-5.

THE persons whom Peter addressed were in great need of comfort. They were strangers, strangers scattered far from home. They had in consequence to suffer manifold trials and therefore needed plenteous consolations. Such is our position in a spiritual sense. We, too, are strangers and foreigners. We are pilgrims and sojourners below, and our citizenship is in Heaven. We also require the Word of comfort, for while our banishment lasts, we look for tribulations. The persons whom Peter addressed were God's chosen, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and one sure result of Divine election is the world's enmity. "If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

So you too, my Brethren, chosen out from among men, to be the peculiar people of God, must expect to be partakers of the Cross—for the servant is not greater than his Lord. Since they persecuted Him they will also persecute you. Therefore to you, as to those of old by Peter, the Word of consolation is sent this

day. The Apostle also addressed the sanctified. Through the Holy Spirit they had been sanctified and set apart. To the "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus" they had been brought. They were a people who had "purified their souls in obeying the Truth of God through the Spirit."

And rest assured no man can do this without encountering fiery trials. He who swims with the stream shall find all things go easily with him until he reaches the waterfall of destruction. But he who stems the torrent must expect to breast many a raging billow. And therefore to such the strong consolations of the Gospel are necessary. Speak we then this morning to the same characters as those addressed by Peter, even to you who "are not of the world," but "strangers." To you who are "chosen of God," and therefore the object of the enmity of man. To you who maintain the separated life of true holiness, and are therefore opposed by the profane.

You have need of comfort, and in the Word, and by the Holy Spirit, your need is more than met. Our Apostle cheers these troubled hearts by exciting them to a song of praise. I might almost entitle these three verses a New Testament Psalm. They are stanzas of a majestic song. You have here a delightful hymn. It scarcely needs to be turned into verse—it is in itself essential poetry.

Now, my Brethren, to lead the mind to praise God is one of the surest ways of uplifting it from depression. The wild beasts of anxiety and discontent which surround our bivouac in the wilderness will be driven away by the fire of our gratitude and the song of our praise. When the Psalm recounts with joyous gratitude the mercies which God has given us, it supplants distress by thankfulness, even as the fir tree and the myrtle take the place of the thorn and the brier where the Gospel works its wonders.

In these three verses we have a string of pearls, a necklace of diamonds, a cabinet of jewels—no, the comparisons are poor—we have something far better than all the riches of the earth can ever typify. You have here the heritage of the chosen of God. Your heritage, Beloved, your own peculiar portion if you belong to Christ this day.

We shall conduct you through this mine of treasure, and ask you to dwell upon each blessing, that your souls may be comforted, and that you, lifting up your hearts in blessing, and praising the God of all Grace, may forget your cares and sorrows, and find a young Heaven begun below—a Paradise blooming amid the desert. There are seven choice things in the text, a perfect number of perfect things. One might see more than seven, but these will exhaust all our time. Therefore we shall speak briefly upon each one.

First, I see in the text as the source of all the rest, ABUNDANT MERCY. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope." No other attribute could have helped us had Mercy refused. As we are by nature Justice condemns us, Holiness frowns upon us, Power crushes us, Truth confirms the threat of the Law, and Wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin.

Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and Mercy, here, performs her noble deeds. My Brethren, God has vouchsafed His mercy to us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case His mercy has been abundant mercy.

We were defiled with abundant sin, and only the multitude of His loving kindnesses could have put those sins away. We were infected with an abundance of evil, and only overflowing mercy can ever cure us of all our natural disease, and make us meet for Heaven. We have received abundant Grace up till now. We have made great drafts upon the Exchequer of God, and of His fullness have all we received Grace for

Grace. Where sin has abounded, Grace has much more abounded. Will you, my fellow Debtor, stand still awhile and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God?

A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head—see it welling up in the Covenant of Grace—in the eternal purposes of Infinite Wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fountain, it is a very geyser, leaping aloft in fullness of power. The springs of the sea are not comparable with it. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love or measure the depths of Infinite Grace.

Follow now the stream—mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the foot of the Cross it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash. See how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment that they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them they are made whole!

See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wherever this stream comes, all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity. These all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with gladsome eye to note the thousand boats of fairest sail which scud along the mighty river with colors flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity!

Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth. But from its lowest depths and all along its unruffled bosom I hear a voice which says, "Here is Love." "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out," but this we know, that His love towards His elect surpasses all conception, even—

"Imagination's utmost stretch In wonder dies away."

Turn to the words of the text a moment, for there is great suggestiveness in them. It is God's great mercy that is spoken of here. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy." Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power—He shakes the world. Great wisdom—He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes, it is Godlike mercy! Infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you shall compute His mercy. My Soul, think for awhile—you have drank out of this exceeding great and wide sea, and it is all yours to drink from forever!

Well may it be called "abundant," if it is infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man's mercy, but God's mercy, and therefore boundless mercy. But note again, it is the mercy of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the mercy of God in Christ. God's mercy is always special, but His mercy in Christ is especially special.

I know not how else to describe it. His mercy in Nature is bright. His mercy in Providence is conspicuous. But His mercy in His dear Son, His mercy in the Incarnate God—His mercy through the perfect Sacrifice—this is mercy's best wine kept to the last. This is mercy's "fat things full of marrow." When I see Jesus descending from Heaven to earth, Jesus bleeding, Jesus paying all the debts of His people, I can well understand that the mercy of God in Christ must be abundant mercy.

Note carefully another word, it is the mercy of "the Father." You have read this last week, I dare say, and felt sickened as you read, the fearful stories of the wounded and their sufferings on the battlefield. You have read also descriptions of how the wounded, when they are brought into the many German towns are met by their compatriots, who re-

joice in their victories, but at the same time lament for the valiant men who are maimed for life. You stand on the platform of the railway station, a stranger, and you see a fine young man with an arm shot away, looking sickly and pale from pain and hardships, and you pity him.

I know you pity him from your heart, but an elderly man rushes before you, it is his father. And as he looks upon his son, whom he sent to the war so manly, so strong, so full of health and vigor—now reduced to the mere ghost of what he was—he pities as a stranger cannot. His inmost heart is moved with compassion for his son. The mercy of the Lord to us is not the mercy of a stranger to a stranger, but the mercy of a Father towards his own dear children. Such mercy has the Lord had on me, and I weep for joy as I tell of it.

"Like as a father pities his children," so has He pitied me. I know if He had not loved me He could not have treated me so tenderly. Such pity, such mercy has He had on you. And He is still the same. Do you not rejoice to think that you participate in abundant mercy, Divine mercy, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, a Father's mercy, the mercy of our God and Father? O reach to the height of the text—one more step will do it.

The Father who is thus tender to us, is also the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And therefore such a Father as can be found nowhere else. The Father of Him who is the Perfect and the Ever-Blessed, is also your Father. And all His mercy belongs to you. Let us congratulate each other, my Brothers and Sisters in the faith. Let us shake off all thoughts of our poverty and all trembling because of our trials. We are rich and abound, for Heaven's "abundant mercy" belongs to us. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

II. The next great blessing in the text is that OF INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE. Mark that, O Believer. "The God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope." One of the first displays of Divine mercy which we experience is being begotten again. Our first birth gave us the image of the first Adam—"earthly." Our second birth, and that alone, gives us the image of the second Adam, which is "heavenly."

To be begotten once may be a curse—to be begotten again is everlastingly and assuredly a blessing. To be born once may be a subject for eternal bewailing—to be born a second time will be the theme of a joyful and unending song. My Brethren, saints are "begotten again unto a lively hope" in the hour of their regeneration, when they are "born again from above."

Have we been so born? If we have, we enjoy a blessing far exceeding anything which the natural man can dream of. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen in the hour appointed and creates in them a new heart and a right spirit. In a supernatural manner a new principle is implanted, a new life is created within the soul. Just as assuredly as our first birth gives us being from our former nothingness, our new life brings us from utter death into the world of spirit, and into newness of life. We are new born by the "incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever." Ours is not the fancied regeneration of those who impute to a mere

ceremony, invented by men, a change which is altogether of God's own working. It is not an imaginary charm worked by incantations and sprinkling over an unconscious baby. It is a real creation, a true life—not fictitious—but actual and operative, and one which is found to reveal itself in righteousness and true holiness.

You shall know this new life by the faith and the repentance which always come with it wherever God Himself is pleased to work it. The new life of a Christian is Divine in its origin—God has begotten us. The new life comes not from man—it is worked by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As certainly as God spoke, and it was done, in the creation of the world, so He speaks in the heart of man, and it is done—and the new creature is born. The new life in us, as it has a Divine origin, has also a Divine Nature. You are made partakers of the Divine Nature.

The life of a Christian is the life of God—God dwells in him. The Holy Spirit Himself enters the Believer and abides in him, and makes him a living man. Therefore, from its Divine Nature, the inner life of the Believer can by no possibility ever be destroyed. You must first destroy the Godhead before you can quench the spark of the eternal flame that burns within the Believer's bosom. Has not the Apostle told us it is a "living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever"?

What a great mystery is this, but at the same time what a blessing! To be born again, to be born from above, to be born by the power of God into a discernment of spiritual truths. To hear spiritual voices, to see spiritual sights, and to be worshippers in spirit and in truth of God, who is a Spirit. God grant that if we have never known this we yet may be created anew in Christ Jesus.

Observe, dear Brethren, to be begotten again is a very marvelous thing. Suppose a man is born into this world, as is too frequently the case, with a predisposition to some sad hereditary disease. There he is, filled with disease, and medicine cannot eject the unwelcome tenant from his body. Suppose that man's body could be altogether new born, and he could

receive a new body pure from all sickness—it would be a great mercy. But, O my Brothers and Sisters, it does not approach to regeneration!

Because our supposition only deals with the body, while the new birth renews the soul, and even implants a higher nature. Regeneration overcomes not a mere material disease, not an infliction in the flesh, but the natural depravity of the heart—the deadly disorder of the soul. We are born again, and by that means we are delivered from the power of corruption. The new nature having no depravity in it, nor tendency to sin, "it cannot sin because it is born of God."

The moment the heavenly life is implanted it begins to war with the old nature, and continues to struggle violently with it—there is a deadly enmity between the two. The new nature will never be reconciled to the old, or the old one to the new, but the new will conquer and overcome the evil. You have smiled at the pleasant fiction of old men being ground young again in a mill—but that marvel would be nothing compared with this—the old man made young would still be the same man. And placed in the same circumstances, he would develop into the same character.

But here is the old man crucified and a new man created in the Divine image! Who can estimate the privilege of receiving a Heaven-born Nature, which, however weak and feeble it may be at the first, is ever-living, and by the power of God will gain the ultimate victory? Let us then rejoice and be glad! We may be very poor today, but we are born from above. We may be much afflicted, but what of that if we are

the twice-born sons of Heaven? We may be despised and rejected, but the heavenly light has shone upon our eyes. We have been regenerated, we have "passed from death unto life." Here is ceaseless cause for gratitude and joy, and if we rightly consider it, we may forget our griefs.

III. A third blessing strictly connected with this new life, is A LIVELY HOPE. "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope." Could a man live without hope? Men manage to survive the worst condition of distress when they are encouraged by a hope. But is not suicide the natural result of the death of hope? Yes, we must have a hope, and the Christian is not left without one. He has "a lively hope," that is to say, first, he has a hope within him, real, true, and operative.

Some men's hopes of Heaven are not living hopes, for they never stir them to action. They live as if they were going to Hell, and yet they coolly talk about hoping that all will be well with them at last! A Christian's hope purifies him, excites him to diligence, makes him seek after that which he expects to obtain. A student at the University hoping to gain a prize uses his best endeavors, burns the midnight oil, strains all his faculties that he may reach the mark which will ensure his passing the exams.

Even thus the Christian with a lively hope devotes himself to obtaining the blessings which God has promised in His Word. The Lord has begotten us to a "lively hope," that is to say, to a vigorous, active, operating hope. It is a "lively hope" in another sense, namely, that it cheers and enlivens. The swimmer who is ready to sink, if he sees a boat nearing him, plucks up courage and swims with all his strength because now he expects that his swimming will be of effectual service to him. The Christian amid the waves and billows of adversity retains his hope, a glorious hope of future bliss, and therefore he strikes out like a man towards the heavenly shore. Our hope buoys up the soul, keeps the head above water, inspires confidence and sustains courage!

It is also called a "living hope," because it is imperishable. Other hopes fade like withering flowers. The hopes of the rich, the boasts of the proud—all these will die out as a candle when it flickers in the socket. The hope of the greatest monarch has been crushed before our eyes. He set up the standard of victory too soon, and has seen it trailed in the mire. There is no unwaning hope beneath the changeful moon—the only imperishable hope is that which climbs above the stars, and fixes itself upon the Throne of God and the Person of Jesus Christ.

The hope which God has given to His truly quickened people is a lively hope, however, because it deals with life. Brethren, it may be Christ will come while yet we live, and then we shall not die but shall be fitted for Heaven by a change. However, it is probable that we may have to depart out of this world unto the Father by the usual course of nature. And in expecting to do so let us not look at death as a gloomy matter, as though it could at all jeopardize our welfare or ultimately injure us.

No, my Brethren, we have a living hope, a lively hope. Charles Borromeo, the famous bishop of Milan, ordered a painter who was about to draw a skeleton with a scythe over a sepulcher, to substitute for it the golden key of Paradise. Truly this is a most fitting emblem for a Believer's tomb—for what is death but the key of Heaven to the Christian? We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over ready to be quenched. Ah, my Brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death.

The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory, will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and before long even the pitcher shall be so remodeled as to become an aid to that light! Its present

breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it molds into dust, shall live again!

These weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them. These hands which grasp today the sword of a conflict shall wave the palm branch of triumph. My Brethren, it were not just that one body should fight and another body should be crowned—that one body should labor and another body have the reward. The same identical body shall rise from the dead at the Lord's coming, marvelously changed, strangely developed as the seed develops into the full-blown flower— but still the same—in very deed the same!

This very body shall be resplendent with glory, even the same which now bears sickness and pain. This is our lively hope—that death has no dominion over any part of our manhood. There is for awhile a separation between the soul and the body—it is but for awhile. There is for the flesh a temporary slumbering in the tomb, it is but a slumber, and the waking shall be in the likeness of Christ. As for the soul, it shall be forever with the Lord, waiting for the latter day and the coming of Christ, when the body itself shall be raised from corruption into the likeness of the Glory of Him who is the first begotten from the dead. Thus, I have brought you up from the abundant mercy to the new life, and onward, to the lively hope.

IV. We cannot tarry, but must notice, in the fourth place, another delightful possession which ought effectually to chase away from all of us the glooms of this life, and that is A RISEN SAVIOR. "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Our best Friend is not dead! Our great Patron and Helper, our Omnipotent Savior, is not lying in the tomb today. He lives, He ever lives! No sound of greater gladness can be heard in the Christian Church than this—"The Lord is risen, the Lord is risen indeed!"

Now, Brethren, observe the connection between a risen Savior and our living hope. Jesus Christ died, not in appearance, but in reality. In proof whereof, His heart was pierced by the soldier's spear. He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, truly a corpse. Not a spark of life remained. The only difference between His dead body and the dead body of any other was that still the preserving power hovered over Him, and as His body had been defiled by no sin, so His flesh could not see corruption as it would have done had it been the body of a sinful man.

Then, at the end of the appointed time, the same Savior who was laid in the tomb rose from the dead—not in se-crecy—but before the Roman guards who watched the sepulcher. They fled in terror. He met His disciples sometimes one by one, sometimes two at a time. On other occasions, four hundred at once saw Him—credible witnesses—persons who had no reason for forging a falsehood. Persons who so believed that they saw Him that many of them died, for their belief, the most painful deaths.

He rose, not in fantasy and figure, but in reality. One of the witnesses put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. And in the presence of His assembled disciples, the Risen One ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. He really and literally rose from the dead—the selfsame Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate—and afterwards ascended into Heaven. That fact is as well proved as any fact in human history. There never, perhaps, was any incident of human history more fully verified than the rising of Jesus of Nazareth from the tomb.

Now, note you well the comfort which arises out of this fact, since it proves that we possess a living Advocate, Mediator and High Priest who has passed into the heavens. Moreover, since all Believers,

being partakers of the incorruptible life of God are one with Jesus Christ, that which happens to Him virtually happens to them. They died in His death, they live in His life, they reign in His Glory. As in Adam all die who were in Adam, so in Christ shall all be made alive who are in Christ—the two Adams head up their dispensations—whatever happens to either of the Adams, happens to those represented by him.

So, then, the resurrection of Jesus is virtually my resurrection. Were He dead still, then might I fear, no, I would know, that I, dying, should die. But He, having died, arose again in due season and lives! Therefore I, dying, shall also rise and live, for as Jesus is, so must I be. If I have within me the new life, I have the same life in me that is in Christ, and the same thing happens to me as happens to Christ. If His life dies, mine, being the same, dies also. But, as He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," my life is secure.

Here, then, is the top and bottom of the Christian's hope—"We are begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." As we see Him alive, we rejoice that He lives, because He lives for us, and we live in

Him.

Let me give you an illustration. When Joseph was in Egypt, he was highly exalted and placed upon the throne. Now, while his brothers did not know him they were grievously afraid to go down into Egypt—they thought him to be an Egyptian, a haughty ruler of the land—and that he treated them roughly. But when once they and their father were persuaded that Joseph, their brother, was alive and on the throne, then they cheerfully joined with the old man when he said, "Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Now, into the unknown land our Elder Brother has gone—where is He and what? Why, He is King of the country. He sits on a Throne. O Brethren, with what comfort do we now go down into that Egypt! With what consolation will we enter the unknown country, which some think to be shrouded in darkness, but which, now that Jesus reigns on its Throne, is full of light to us!

Or take another image. When the children of Israel went through the Jordan, they were told that the Jordan would divide before them, but they were still more fully assured when the priests went forward with the ark. For as soon as the feet of the priests touched the edge of the river, the waters began to divide. As they saw their priests march through the bed of the stream, and come up on the other side, all doubts about the security of the passage must have vanished at once! The priests were the representatives of the people before God, and where they passed safely all Israel might go.

See you, then, my Brethren, the "Great High Priest of our profession" has led the van. The ark of the Eternal Covenant has gone before, death is dried up, so that we can say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" And you and I may, with perfect confidence, full of a lively hope, march onwards into the Glory land, for Jesus Christ has safely passed the flood, and even so shall we. Here, then, is reason for joy. We will not fear the present, we will not dread the future. For Christ is risen, indeed, and our lively hope is fixed on Him. Thus we have set before you four out of the seven precious things.

V. The fifth is exceedingly rich, but we can only give a word where many sermons would not exhaust—AN INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE—"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." God has been pleased in His abundant mercy to prepare for His people an inheritance. He has made them sons, and if children, then heirs. He has given them a new life, and if a new life, then there must be

possessions and a place suitable for that new life.

A heavenly nature requires a heavenly inheritance, Heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion. Now I shall only ask you to notice that the inheritance which God has prepared for us has a fourfold description appended to it. First, as to its substance—it is "incorruptible." The substance of everything earthly by degrees passes away. Even solid granite will rot and crumble. The substance of things seen, I may say in paradox, is devoid of substance.

Empires have grown great, but the inward corruption within their constitution has at length dissolved them. Dynasties have been wrecked, and thrones have tottered by internal corruption, but the inheritance of the saints of God has nothing within it that can make it perish. Forever and forever shall the blissful portion of the sanctified be theirs. Heaven, and the streets thereof, are all said to be of precious stones and pure gold, because they are imperishable.

Next, for purity—it is "undefiled." Earthly inheritances are often defiled in the getting. Some men have grown rich by fraud, by violence, by oppression of the poor. How many a heritage is polluted all over with the slime of the serpent! And he that inherits the goods of such a one inherits therewith a curse, for God will surely avenge injustice and wrong doing, even to the third generation.

But our inheritance is undefiled, for it was won by the obedience, the perfection, and sufferings of Jesus. No thought of wrong was used in the getting of the portion of the Well-Beloved of God. An inheritance may be defiled after it is possessed, but Heaven never shall be. Satan shall never enter there, nor sin of any kind pass through the gate of pearl. O Brethren, what a joy is this! Defilement is on everything in this fallen world. We cannot purge ourselves completely—earthly things all bring a measure of defilement with them. But up yonder our portion shall not be stained with sin, we shall be perfect, and all around us perfect, too.

And then it is added for its beauty, "it fades not away." The substance of a thing might endure after its beauty was gone, but in Heaven there shall be no declining in the beauty of anything celestial. Milton sings of the amaranth, which he describes as blossoming at the foot of the tree of life in the garden of Eden. It was a flower of perpetual sweetness, whose beauty never faded. But he says —

"Soon for man's offense

To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows And flowers aloft, shading the fountain of life, And where the river of bliss through midst of Heaven Rolls over Elysian flowers her amber stream;

With these, that never fade, the spirits elect Bind their resplendent locks, wreathed with beams." The amaranthine inheritance is yours. The garden of Paradise shall never cease to bloom, and the wreath of victory shall never wither from your brows. Oh, what joy is this for you! Your inheritance is for substance incorruptible, for purity undefiled, for beauty unfading. And then for possession, it is secure—"reserved in Heaven for you." How I delight to dwell upon the thought that Heaven is not to be scrambled for, that the portion of each saint in Glory is given to him by lot even as was Canaan of old to Judah, to Reuben, to Manasseh, and the like.

There is a place in Heaven for me which none of you could fill. There is a harp which no fingers can strike but mine, and a crown which no brow can wear but this. And so with each of you—you shall have your own, your own appointed inheritance. He has begotten each one of you again—you are as truly begotten as any other Believer. You have the same hope, and you shall as surely stand in your lot at the end of the

days. O clap your hands, you righteous! Shout for joy! Scanty is your portion here and hard your lot, it may be, but the undefiled inheritance will more than make amends. Therefore, lift up your hearts this day, and let not your hands hang down.

VI. Time fails us, therefore we must mention the sixth blessing at once, it is INVIOABLE SECURITY. The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance. The word is a military one. It signifies a city garrisoned and defended. Think of a city besieged—Strasbourg, if you will—that is an emblem of your condition in this world. The enemy pour in their shot, they keep up the fire day and night, and set the city on a blaze, and even thus Satan bombards us with temptations, and beleaguers us with all the hosts of Hell.

Our great enemy has determined to raze the citadel of our faith even to the ground. His great guns are drawn up around our bastions. His sappers and miners are busy with our bulwarks. Even now it may be his shells are tearing our hearts, and his shot is setting our nature in a blaze.

Herein is our confidence—our great Captain has walled us around—He has appointed Salvation for walls and bulwarks. We are safe, though all the devils of Hell surround us, for we are garrisoned by Omnipotence. Each Believer is kept by that same power which "bears the earth's huge pillars up," and sustains the arches of Heaven. Jerusalem, you are besieged, but you may laugh your enemy to scorn, he shall never break through your ramparts—

"Munitions of stupendous rock Our dwelling place shall be, There shall our soul without a shock Our vanquished foemen see."

Our enemies shall assemble, but when they perceive that God is known in our palaces for a refuge, they shall be troubled and hasten away. Fear shall take hold upon them, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Every Believer is kept by the power of God, but the power of God does not produce in us sloth—but faith. We are commanded to watch, that is what we are to do. But we are told both to watch and pray, because our watching is not enough. We need God's watching, also, and we are to pray for it. Faith is the under captain of the city. God's power protects it—"the King is in the midst of her." But Faith is the high constable of the tower. He it is that goes on the walls, arms the warders, strengthens the bastions, and brings help out of the sanctuary. While the sword of the Lord and of Gideon is at work, the Midianites cannot prevail.

This keeping, observe, my Brothers and Sisters, for I must leave the point—this keeping is complete and continuous—it will never end until we shall need keeping no longer. We shall be kept "unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I believe this means that we shall not only be kept till our souls reach Heaven, but we shall be kept till the advent. You say, "Why is that necessary?" I reply, only half of our manhood goes to Heaven at death, the other part, namely, our body, waits below till the resurrection. Yet our dust is precious in God's sight, and therefore it is watched over until the day of Christ's appearing—for that is the appointed hour for the redemption of the body—

"Sweet Truth to me, I shall arise, And with these eyes, my Savior see."

Wherever my dust may be scattered, though to the four winds of Heaven it is divided, though it pass through every conceivable change and combination—yet each atom of my dust shall hear the sound of the archangel's trump—or if not each earthly particle of this my frame, yet each essential constituent shall hear the voice of God. And bone to bone each bone shall come, and the body shall rise intact and perfect, for it is kept by the power of God unto the salvation ready to be revealed.

O my Brethren, what a glorious thing it is to know that the salvation God has given us in Christ is a perfect salvation of our complete manhood! There shall not a hair of your head perish. You shall go into the furnace, you shall walk amid the glowing coals of death, but you shall come forth with not a smell of fire passed upon you. At the Lord's appearing you shall be none the worse for the fall of Adam. You shall be none the worse for your own transgressions. You shall be none the worse for all the scars of battle. You shall be none the worse for dying—you shall be in Heaven as bright as God Himself could have made you if you had never fallen, and never sinned!

Do I exaggerate? No, verily, for it is written, "We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." We shall wake up in His likeness. Oh, the glory of complete victory over Satan's arts, and Satan's strength! He shall be defeated all along the line! He shall gain nothing by all his attacks upon our God, and upon us—but we in the image of Jesus shall laugh at the complete defeat of evil, and glorify God and the Lamb forever!

VII. The best I have reserved for the last. Out of the seven treasures of the Christian the last comprehends all, is better than all, though what I have already spoken is everything—it is A BLESSED GOD. We left this to the last, though it comes first—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is joy to have Heaven, it is joy to possess a new life to fit me for Heaven—but the greatest of all is to have my God, my own Savior's God, my Father, my own Savior's Father, to be all my own!

God Himself has said, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." He has not given you earth and Heaven only, though that were much. He has given you the Heaven of Heaven—Himself. Herod spoke of giving the "half of his kingdom." But the Lord has not given you the half of His kingdom, nor even the whole of His kingdom only—but His own Self the blessed God has in Covenant made over to you. Will not this make you rejoice? Methinks you may go forth with those that make merry and rejoice before God with a joy that knows no bound—"Sing unto God, sing praise," sing, unto God, sing praises! Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."

Brethren, the practical point is, show your gratitude and your joy by blessing God. You can bless Him with your voices. Sing more than you do. Singing is Heaven's work, practice it here. At your work, do if you can, quietly raise a hymn and bless the Lord. But oh, keep the fire on the altar of your hearts always burning! Praise Him, bless Him. His mercy endures forever, so let your praises endure.

Bless Him also with your substance. He is a blessed God. Do not give Him mere words—they are but air—and tongues but clay. Give Him the best you have. In the old superstitious times the Churches used to be adorned with the rarest pearls and jewels, with treasures of gold and silver—for men then gave mines of wealth to what they believed to be the service of God.

Shall the true faith have less operative power upon us? Shall the "lively hope" make us do less for God than the mere dead hope of the followers of Rome? No, let us be generous at all times, and count it our joy to sacrifice unto our God. Let us give Him our efforts, our time, our talents. Bless the Lord this afternoon, you Sunday school teachers. Teach those dear children under a sense of your own obligations to God. You who go from house to house this afternoon, you who will preach in the streets and lift up your voices in the corners of the thoroughfares—preach as those who are begotten unto a lively hope by the abundant mercy of God.

Preacher, live more intensely and ardently than ever you have done. Deacons, serve the Church more thoroughly than you have done as yet. Elders, give your whole souls to the care of Christ's flock, which He has redeemed with His blood. Each one of you workers for Jesus Christ work not for Him after an ordinary

sort, as men do for a master whose pay is no larger than he can be compelled to make it—but work with heart, and soul, and strength for Him who loved you to the death and poured out His soul to redeem you from going down into Hell.

Thus prove that the Divine Nature is truly in you, and that you possess the "lively hope" implanted by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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