

The Valley Exalted, and the Mountain Laid Low

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon emphasizes the importance of removing obstacles and difficulties that stand in the path of the Lord's coming, so that he may come in his chariot of love and reveal his glory to the soul.

Scripture: Psalm 40:2, Psalm 88:4, Isaiah 40:4, Matthew 3:1, John 16:9, Acts 17:31, Romans 1:4, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Philippians 1:22, Revelation 20:12

Topics: "Spiritual Comfort", "Gods Promises"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on the prophecy from Isaiah 40:4-5, emphasizing the figurative language of obstacles being removed for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He delves into the spiritual and experiential exalting of valleys, making low mountains, straightening crooked paths, and smoothing rough places to reveal the glory of the Lord. Philpot highlights the need for a revelation of Christ to the soul to bring comfort, peace, and solid ground for faith. He assures that all obstacles will be overcome, all flesh will see the glory of the Lord, and God's promises will surely come to pass.

Transcript

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on April 4, 1858, by J. C. Philpot

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low--and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain--and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together--for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." Isaiah 40:4, 5

We can have no doubt as to the primary and original meaning of these words, for the Holy Spirit himself, in the New Testament, is their divine interpreter. We read thus, Matthew 3:1-3, "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

The language of the text is, of course, highly figurative, and is an allusion to a practice in ancient times of Oriental monarchs. There being in those days no highways nor beaten roads in most parts of their dominions, when they intended to visit some of their distant provinces, they were accustomed not only to send messengers beforehand to announce their approach, but pioneers also to remove all impediments to their progress. There were often deep valleys and morasses, which had to be filled up; hills and mountains to be laid low; crooked paths and intricate roads amid woods and forests, to be straightened; and rough

places, overgrown with thorns, thickets, and briars, and overspread with loose rocks and stumbling stones, which had to be smoothed and taken away. As the king traveled in great state, it was necessary to make room for the royal chariot--for the approach of majesty with all its splendor; and as the monarch never journeyed unattended, the road was to be made wide enough for his suite of servants and numerous cavalcade as well as for himself.

The Holy Spirit, adopting this Eastern practice as a scriptural figure, represents thereby the obstacles that were to be removed for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords; for it is of him that the text speaks. As regards his first coming in the flesh, which is the primary meaning of the text, there were many obstacles in providence to be removed. Many barbarous and warlike tribes had to be subdued by the Romans and molded into one universal, united Empire, that there might be a free communion by sea and land; one language--the Greek tongue--had to be generally spoken, that there might be a ready means of communicating the mind and will of God to the Gentile world. The Jews had to be subdued and brought under the Roman yoke, that Christ might appear in the flesh and die upon the cross--a purely Roman punishment. Roads had to be made, bridges built, ships constructed and navigated, towns and cities and colonies spread far and wide, general civilization advanced, and laws enacted and put in force, that the gospel might be preached to all nations. All the obstacles of barbarism, war, bloodshed, anarchy, and violence had to be removed, that the Prince of Peace might come and establish his kingdom upon earth.

But besides the removal of these outward obstacles, the words have a special application to the ministry of John the Baptist, who, by his preaching in the wilderness, prepared a way for the manifestation of the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah.

But the words of the text are applicable not only to the first manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and the preparations made for it by the preaching of John in the wilderness, but to the removal also of those obstacles which precede the inward revelation of Christ to the soul; and it is in this latter point of view that I shall, with God's blessing, now consider them. In doing this, I shall--

I. First, direct your attention to the spiritual and experimental exalting of every valley, the making low of every mountain and hill, the straightening of that which is crooked, and the making plain of that which is rough.

II. Secondly, dwell upon the inward revelation of Christ, as intimated by the words--"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed."

III. Thirdly, open the gracious promise, that "all flesh shall see it together."

IV. And fourthly, unfold God's own solemn ratification, that these things shall surely come to pass--"The mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

I. The spiritual and experimental exalting of every valley, the making low of every mountain and hill, the straightening of that which is crooked, and the making plain of that which is rough. I have just hinted that the figurative language of our text represents the removal of obstacles; but looking at the figures one by one, I shall, with God's blessing, attempt to show how they individually bear upon the experience of a Christian. In this sense, what valleys have to be raised, what mountains and hills to be leveled, what crooked things to be straightened, what rough places to be made plain, in order that the glory of God may be revealed! Everything in sense and nature is opposed to the revelation of Christ to the soul. Everything

within us, everything outside us, is opposed to his grace and his love, and to the manifestation of these blessings to the heart.

A. "Every valley shall be exalted." By the "valley" we may understand those deep depressions in providence or in grace that have, so to speak, to be filled up, and thus a firm and solid way made for the chariot of the King of kings, which is "paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem" (Song Sol. 3:10) to enter the heart. You will find that the work of God usually begins with affliction, and very often in some deep providential trial. The Thessalonians received the word in much affliction (1 Thess. 1:6), whereas the stony ground hearers receive the word with joy (Matt. 13:20.) These afflictions make a deep and hidden valley in the heart, which nothing but the presence and love of Christ can fill up.

1. How many young people have been disappointed in their tenderest and warmest affections! And however old people whose hearts are dried up, and money grubbers of both sexes and all ages who never had a heart to dry up at all, may slight and ridicule these disappointments that the young so deeply and acutely feel, those who have experienced them know that there is nothing that so touches the heart's tenderest core, no wound more piercing, no grief more lacerating than the poignant stroke that falls upon young and strong affections. And yet how often has the death of natural love been the life of the soul, and out of the grave of the heart's buried hopes has there been a resurrection into the kingdom of God and the hope of the gospel! Many a young person has dated the beginning of a work of grace from some cruel disappointment that seemed at the time to cut the very heart-strings of life. But for this crushing, overwhelming stroke, there would have been no room for Christ and his love. This is "a valley."

2. How many also have felt it in the taking down of some dear idol out of its niche, in some heavy family stroke, such deep depressions of mind, such a sense of heart-rending distress, that it seemed at the time as if nothing upon earth could ever heal the wound--nothing that even God himself could give could ever compensate so irreparable a loss! How many a widow has wept bitter, bitter tears night and day over the memory of a departed husband! How many a husband has mourned over the wife of his youth, snatched by cruel disease from his bosom! How many a parent has wept over a beloved child, the very pride of the family, the fairest and most promising of them all, and as such engrossing perhaps the greatest share of their affections! These are "valleys" which in many cases are sunk beforehand in mercy that they may be exalted by the manifestation of Christ.

3. Others again have had great losses of property; no, some, through sudden and most unexpected reverses, have been brought down from comparative comfort, to become dependent upon friends and relatives for their daily bread. Others have had all their worldly schemes withered--everything they set their hand to so blighted, as with the east wind, that nothing prospered with them, until they were reduced to the greatest poverty and distress. By these providential strokes, depressing both body and mind, the Lord sometimes makes a way for his grace to visit the heart.

These disappointments, bereavements, losses, and afflictions are not grace, nor do they procure it, deserve it, produce, or even necessarily lead to it. How many have drunk the deepest, bitterest draughts of sorrow to whom it was but "the sorrow of the world that works death." Men gnaw their tongues for pain, and yet so far from repenting of their deeds, may only the more blaspheme the God of heaven for their pains and their sores (Rev. 16:10, 12). But in the case of many of the Lord's people, he often does send these afflictions and bereavements as harbingers of his appearance, to make a valley, which his love and grace may in due time fill up.

4. But there are SPIRITUAL valleys as well as providential, and these are much the more important. The Lord, by his grace, has to prepare a place for himself in the heart, by scooping out (if I may use the expression) that pride and self-righteousness of which, by nature, our mind is so full. But in order to do this, what deep wounds he often makes by his holy law! What pangs of guilt, cutting convictions, and severe distress does he produce by its spiritual application to the conscience! But why this except to produce a valley that only he can fill up by his blood and love? What depression of mind--what a giving way of cheerfulness and high spirits--what a dragging down both of body and soul, of health and strength, is there in many a partaker of grace under those dealings of God with his conscience that brings his sins to view! These depressing feelings, these inward sinkings, these falling down of body and soul under the hand of God, are so many chasms and valleys that are to be filled up.

5. But in natural valleys stagnant water continually settles which makes the whole of the sunken ground a morass. Thus there are deep pools of sin in our heart, stagnant marshes, foul morasses of filth and slime, from which there is constantly exhaling a reeking stench of everything to make body and soul alike sicken and languish. These are the "miry places" and "marshes" that are "given to salt" (Ezek. 47:11); "the pools of water" where the owl screeches (Isaiah 14:23); the lower grounds of the soul where mists and fogs brood and settle.

How are these valleys to be filled up? They must be filled up that the King of kings may come in his chariot of love. These "valleys," then, are to be "exalted;" that is, to be raised up from their depressed condition. These holes and pits have to be filled up; these morasses to be drained; these deep sinkings of soil and soul to be made firm ground, that a solid road may be built upon them. As in the formation of a railway, the valley has to be filled up as well as the hill cut through--so in the figure before us the valley is to be exalted, as well as the mountain and hill made low.

Now grace, in the manifestations of Christ, fills up the valley. The wound in your affections that you thought never could be healed; the distressing bereavement in your family; the painful trial and heavy loss in providence; and not only these temporal griefs and sorrows, but the mournful feelings in grace, the bitter pangs that you may have experienced from the weight and burden of guilt laid upon your conscience, your doubts and fears and sinkings of heart--all these deep depressions and hollows have to be filled up; all have to be brought out of their sinking condition. That marshy state of soul; that "miry clay" in which the feet are fixed (Psalm 40:2); that "deep mire where there is no standing" (Psalm 69:2); that Slough of Despond into which the Pilgrim sinks, have all to be drained, that there may be firm, solid ground.

This firm and solid ground is the manifested love and blood of Christ; the revelation (to which I shall come presently) of the glory of God to the soul, in the person and works of Immanuel, God with us. This exalts the valley, for it fills the aching void, heals the wound, drains the morass, and makes the ground firm and solid by manifesting salvation as a divine reality, as an unshaken and irremovable foundation.

But before Christ thus comes to fill up every void, there is a preparing of the way for him by the promises and invitations of the gospel, and by the solid truths of divine revelation, which, cast, as it were, into the sinking soul, raise it up to a firm hope, and thus make way for a clearer and fuller manifestation of the Lord himself.

B. But there are "mountains and hills," and these are to be "made low;" because the road is to be perfectly level as well as perfectly straight. "Mountains and hills," as figures, represent obstacles and difficulties that stand in the path. As we read in Zechariah, "Who are you, O great mountain? (that is O great obstacle.)

Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain"--you shall be leveled and removed. And who has not found, in the first approaches of God to his soul, in the first dealings of the blessed Spirit with his conscience, great mountains and hills in the way? Some of these are from natural, but not for that less trying quarters. How our relatives and friends oppose, perhaps persecute us; how our temporal interests often stand in the way of our conscience; and how, as was particularly my own case, all our worldly prospects and all our long and deeply cherished plans stand as a mountain in the way of taking up the cross and following Christ.

My first stroke was the cutting down of all my worldly prospects, for those who could and would have advanced me to emolument and honor were deadly enemies to the truths of the gospel which I had embraced. The second was sharper still, for it took away my all, and almost stripped me to the last penny. When I was in the Church of England, I thought nothing could bring me out, for I dreaded the prospect of poverty and sickness, as I was at that time in a bad state of health. Oh, what a mountain this was before my eyes! The very thought of leaving, how it worked in my mind, until conscience knocked at the door again and again; and the voice of conscience at last obliged me to listen and obey. But so different was the prospect from reality, that the day after I left was one of the most comfortable I ever had in my life; and truly wonderful for more than twenty-three years since, have been the Lord's providential dealings with me.

You, perhaps, have had similar trials. Religion might have cost you the dearest friend you had in the world. You might have been attached, perhaps, to some carnal person, whom you loved almost to distraction, and yet were obliged to break off the connection for the sake of religion. Or you might have been in a situation of trust and emolument which you were compelled to relinquish, because the grace of God so wrought in your conscience that you felt you could not keep it and be a consistent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are no common trials; but if saved from them, there was still the disgrace and shame that attend the public profession of the truth, and which your proud heart could hardly bear. Oh, if you could only have the gospel preached in your own parish church, or lived in London where nobody knew who you were or where you went! But to come to chapel and profess before a despising world a religion that would make you hated and scorned--that seemed an obstacle that never could be gotten over.

But these after all are but "hills," and to some mere hillocks. There are "mountains" behind, which come into view as the "hills" are laid low--by which we may understand spiritual and inward, as distinct from temporal and outward obstacles.

1. There is, for instance, the hard heart--"the heart of stone," as the Scripture calls it, which you never feel until you want to repent and cannot. Repentance and godly sorrow for sin, you are led to see are necessary to salvation; but they are Christ's gift, who is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins. This hard heart, then, that you cannot remove or dissolve, stands as a mountain between heaven and your soul.

2. Again--unbelief with its workings; perhaps infidelity, with its dreadful suggestions; perhaps blasphemy, with its vile imaginations; perhaps Satan, with his fiery darts, discharging the artillery of hell against you--all these were so many mountains that seemed to stand in your way, to intercept the light of heaven from your soul. You desired pardon and peace, but they would not come into your heart.

3. But the chief mountain of a quickened soul is its sins. Was not this your case when eternal things first pressed with weight upon your conscience? Under guilt and fear, at intervals by night and day you

cried--"Oh, my sins! my sins! Oh, the guilt and bondage that I feel! Oh, the misery and wretchedness I have procured to myself by following the vile inclinations of my wicked heart!" All your sins were brought to light by the holy law of God and set before your eyes until you thought you would sink into hell. And as all these one after another rose to your view, they seemed mountains between you and God, so that you could scarcely hope that ever mercy would reach your case--could scarcely believe it possible that the grace of God itself could save you. You thought perhaps you had sinned against the Holy Spirit; said and done things that God neither would nor could forgive; been guilty of such horrid heart-wickedness and such contempt of God and godliness that even the mercy that reached the dying thief could not reach you. All these various and perplexing exercises of mind were so many mountains that stood day and night before your soul. I shall show by and by how those hills and mountains are laid low.

C. But there are CROOKED THINGS which are to be made straight. This figure casts a sweet light upon the exercises of many a child of God, and the way in which the Lord removes them. Whenever the Lord begins a work of grace upon the heart, he always makes it sincere before him. SINCERITY is the groundwork of all true religion. If a man is not sincere, he is nothing. The light of God searching his heart makes him see, and the life of God quickening his conscience makes him feel, that he has to do with One whom he dare not mock and cannot deceive. This makes him sincere before God and man. As, then, light is given to see, and light to feel, he begins to find what crooked things there are in his carnal mind--what deceit, hypocrisy, malice, and animosity; what workings up against everything holy and godly. These are crooked things, for they are opposed to that sincerity and godly fear which have been implanted by grace in his heart.

His path, too, in providence may be very crooked. He may be linked to a very crooked partner, whose wretched temper daily tries his mind; or have crooked children, whom he can neither control by kindness nor persuade by counsel. He may himself have a very crooked temper, continually manifesting itself, if not in words, yet in the rising up of angry thoughts and feelings which he cannot prevent or subdue. His daily lot may be cast with people who are, to use a familiar term, extremely aggravating--whose delight and pleasure are to put him off his guard, and to provoke him to anger, and thus bring guilt upon his conscience.

His very position may expose him to peculiar temptations. He may, for months be placed in a situation where there is a daily snare; where his eyes are continually wandering after evil, and where Satan, as in the case of Joseph, is ever thrusting some temptation into his path, that might, but for God's grace, prove his utter downfall. These are some of the crooked things which have to be made straight.

Or he may have sinned in a peculiar way. Under circumstances of peculiar and powerful temptation, he may have been overcome, and thus have brought great distress upon his conscience. And this sad fall has made everything else so crooked without and within that they seem almost to defy the very power and love of God to straighten.

D. But there are "ROUGH PLACES to be made plain." In providence, his path may be rough; many thorns may grow in the road; he may have many domestic trials that are to him constant sources of vexation and pain. He may have poverty and sickness--a heavy debt owing to his banker and a long bill with his doctor, an afflicted wife, and little children who cannot work and must be fed. If in business he may be continually in difficulties from scanty capital and frequent losses. These are "rough places" in providence; but he may have rougher in grace.

Wherever he goes, whatever he does, there may be a stumbling block set in his path; his road may become more and more perplexing; thorns and briars may grow thicker and denser, so that every step he takes he treads upon a thorn, and every time he moves his feet he lacerates them with a briar. In dark nights he may stumble over rough stumbling-stones; and only now and then, as the sun shines, does he tread the road heavenward with pleasure.

Now all these valleys, mountains, crooked things, and rough places are in the sovereign appointment and by the special direction of God; and it is their removal that proves the greatness of his power and love. If in your road heavenward, no valley never sank before you; if no mountain and hill never rose up in sight; if you encountered no crooked path through the dense woods; and no rough places, with many a rolling stone and many a thorny briar in the tangled forest, it would not seem that you were treading the way which the saints of God have always trod, nor would it appear as if you needed special help from the sanctuary, or any peculiar power to be put forth for your help and deliverance.

But being in this path, and that by God's own appointment, and finding right before your eyes valleys of deep depression which you cannot raise up; mountains and hills of difficulties that you cannot lay low; crooked things which you cannot straighten; and rough places which you cannot make smooth, you are compelled, from felt necessity, to look for help from above. These perplexing difficulties, then, are the very things that make yours a case for the gospel, yours a state of mind to which salvation by grace is thoroughly adapted, yours the very condition of soul to which the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is altogether suitable. So that if you could at the present moment view these trials with spiritual eyes, and feel that they were all appointed by unerring wisdom and eternal love, and were designed for the good of your soul, you would rather bless God that your pathway was so cast in providence and grace that you had now a valley, now a mountain, now a crook, and now a thorn. And even as regards the present experience of your soul, you would feel that these very difficulties in the road were all productive of so many errands to the throne--that they all called upon you, as with so many speaking voices, to beg of the Lord that he would manifest himself in love to your heart.

We all want ease; we love a smooth path. We would like to be carried to heaven in ease; to enjoy every comfort that earth can give or heart desire, and then, dying without a pang of body or mind, find ourselves safe in heaven. But this is not God's way. The word of truth, the sufferings of Christ, and the universal experience of the saints, all testify against the path of ease; all testify for the path of trial; they all proclaim, as with one united voice, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction"--and this is the way of ease and of that prosperity which destroys fools (Prov. 1:32); but "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life"--and this is the path of suffering and sorrow.

II. But I pass on to show how all this is necessary for the revelation of the glory of the Lord; and how, when the glory of the Lord is revealed, it exalts the valley, lays low the mountain, makes the crooked straight, and every rough place plain.

The revelation of the glory of the Lord was primarily and especially seen in the coming of Christ in the flesh. When Jesus came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," it was a manifestation of the glory of God. As we read in the gospel of John (1:18), "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." God being essentially invisible, for not only has no man seen, but no man can see him (1 Tim. 6:16), his glory can only be made known in the person of a Mediator who, as his only begotten Son, is "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." (Heb. 1:3.) It was the view of this glory which drew his disciples to his feet, as holy John speaks, "And we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This glory, it is true, the world never saw, as the Apostle declares--"Which none of the princes of this world knew--for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8); for it was a spiritual glory, only revealed to the saints of God.

The glory of Christ in his first appearance in the flesh was to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His humiliation veiled his glory; but his Person was in itself unspeakably glorious as God-Man; his work was infinitely glorious, as the perfect obedience of a Son; his sufferings were glorious, as endured in conformity to the will of God; his death was glorious, though in outward aspect so ignominious, as thereby destroying death and him who had the power of it, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14); his resurrection was glorious, as he was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4); his ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father was glorious, for there he entered into his glory (Luke 24:26); and his second coming will be glorious, for then he and his saints will appear together in glory. (Col. 3:4.)

But not only was the revelation of Christ in the flesh in itself unutterably glorious, but there is--what I am especially aiming at--the revelation of this glory in its measure to the SOUL. And this is when Christ is spiritually and inwardly revealed by the power of God; as Paul speaks, in his own case--"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." (Gal. 1:15, 16.) And again, as the experience of all believers--"For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) When, then, we have some manifestation of the beauty and blessedness, the blood, love, and salvation of the great and glorious incarnate God, then "the glory of the Lord" is revealed inwardly in the soul, as well as outwardly in the Person of Christ and the word of his grace. Now it is this, and this only, which fully and thoroughly exalts the valley, lays low the mountain and hill, makes every crooked place straight, and every rough place plain.

Let us, then, now see, one by one, how it accomplishes those blessed effects.

1. You, or at least some of you, as I before endeavored to open up have had many things in times past, or it may be at the present moment, very deeply to try your mind. Your bereavements and family afflictions have been or are very distressing; your losses in providence have very much exercised your mind; your sins at times have been or still are a great burden to your conscience; your doubts and fears have severely harassed you; and you have had many painful exercises, and may still have them, whether you are a child of God at all. Now you need something to come from the Lord himself into your soul to relieve you from this depression, from this pain and exercise, this grief and sorrow, this sinking of heart; that shall do for you what is spoken of in our text--"exalt the VALLEY." You need this bereavement filled up; this wound in your conscience healed; this painful exercise of mind removed; and something given to you that shall be firm and solid--a path in which you may walk without doubt or fear, guilt or bondage.

These troubles and trials in themselves give you no evidence of sonship; you cannot build a hope for eternity upon doubts and fears, guilt of conscience, and distress of soul. It is with the heart as with the natural soul--the marsh and the morass, the filthy ditch and the slimy pool lodge in the depression of the valley, but do not make the ground solid, or fill it up with firm, sound material. You saw, you felt, you still see and feel, that your troubles, trials, sorrows, losses, bereavements, do not bring into your soul the grace of God; on the contrary, that they produce or foster peevishness, murmuring, rebellion, unbelief, infidelity. This scum and filth of our depraved nature settled, worked, heaved, and fermented in the lower grounds of your soul. In all this there was nothing solid. What wise man builds a house in a morass or a

quaking bog? What godly man can build for eternity on doubt and fear? You needed, therefore, something solid that you could rest upon, as satisfying you that your sins were pardoned, and that the Lord was your everlasting portion.

Now when the glory of the Lord is revealed--when Christ is made spiritually and experimentally known--when his Person is viewed by the eye of faith, his blood seen, his obedience looked unto, and a measure of his love and mercy felt, these divine and solid realities fill every aching void, supply every deficiency, make up every loss, remove guilt and bondage, and thus give solid ground for rest, and peace, and happiness.

2. Again--this "MOUNTAIN," that stood perhaps for months before you, and which you thought never could be lowered; those amazing outward difficulties that surrounded you when you first began to make a profession; that contempt of the world that you felt you could hardly bear; those fears lest if you went on in this religion, you would have to sacrifice all your respectability, your position in life, and perhaps the little money you had gotten together--this mountain and hill that stood so long in your way, why, what was it, where is it when you experience any discovery of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ? It falls in a moment by itself; and you wonder that you could ever have made a mountain of it. "Every mountain and hill shall be laid low."

So with your hard heart--your stony, rocky, unfeeling soul. Let there be only some discovery of Christ--some revelation of the glory of God--some manifestation of his love, and grace, and blood--down goes the hard heart! The rock is removed out of its place (Job 14:18); the stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulcher; the mountain flows down at his presence, and melts like the snow-wreath in spring before the Sun of righteousness.

Every difficulty, outward and inward, is now removed. You can now bear reproach, endure persecution, submit to every trial in providence and in grace. You can feel a solemn pleasure in casting your lot among the saints of God, for you now esteem them as the excellent of the earth. Having Christ, in him you have a basis of peace--a solid foundation on which to stand in life and death, time and eternity. And thus you find every mountain and hill blessedly laid low.

3. And your CROOKED PATH! That crook in your lot--that dispensation so peculiarly trying which has grieved you over and over again; those painful and perplexing circumstances, which have given such a color to your whole life, that you would have prevented or altered at any sacrifice, but cannot; those crooked things which every day lie in your path, and which are so amiss that the more you try to straighten them, the more crooked they become--let there be a revelation of the glory of the Lord to your soul; let there be a sweet testimony in your conscience that you are accepted in the Beloved, that your sins are cast behind his back, and that you are an "heir of God and a joint heir with Christ," where are your crooks then?

Your crooked temper itself, that crookedest of all crooks, becomes straightened; everything is now right; you would not have a single thing altered; the whole way in which you have been led is a way of wisdom and mercy from beginning to end; and you would not have a single thing different to what it has been and now is. The trial was very painful at the time; it was a heavy cross, and you sometimes thought you could never live through it. But now you can say--"Bless God for it! He supported me under it, brought me through it, and I would not have one thing different from what it has been either in providence or in grace."

But you cannot truly and honestly say this except you have been, or are now favored with a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. What is the mind of man--of any man--of your mind, my mind, under affliction? Let him be tried with pain of body, poverty of circumstances, sickness in his family, guilt of conscience, hard bondage in his own soul, without any beam of divine light upon his path, and what is he? A murmuring, rebellious wretch, without a grain of resignation, without a particle of contentment or submission to the will of God.

But let the glory of the Lord be revealed; let him have a view by faith of a suffering Jesus; let some ray of light shine upon his path; let there be some breaking in of the exceeding weight of glory that is to be manifested at Christ's appearing--where are all his crooked things now? All made straight. But how? By his crooked will--crooked because it did not lie level with the Lord's--being made to harmonize with the promise and precept, the footsteps and example of the blessed Jesus. The crook is not taken out of the lot, but straightened in the lot; the cross is not removed from the shoulder, but strength--that strength which is "made perfect in weakness"--is given to bear it. So it was with Christ himself in the garden and on the cross; so it is with the believing followers of the crucified One.

4. But how does the Lord "make the ROUGH PLACES plain"? That rough and rugged road, where stumbling-blocks were so thickly strewn; the unbelief and infidelity of your heart; the suggestions of Satan and the workings of your own reasoning mind, which entangled you in such a maze; the briars and thorns which so lacerated your feet--what becomes of these rough places when the glory of the Lord is revealed? All these stumbling-blocks are removed in a moment; unbelief is silenced; infidelity is put to flight; Satan slinks away confounded; the reasoning mind bows to the force of the Spirit's inward witness; what was difficult to understand becomes easy to believe; and the intricate mazes where reason was lost are made plain to a childlike spirit.

Nothing can stand the Lord's presence and power. When these are felt, what obstacle will not give way? what valley will then not be exalted? what mountain and hill not then be made low? what crooked path not then be made straight; and what rough place not then be made plain? But it is only the revelation of the glory of the Lord that does this; and without it the valley will still be a valley, the mountain still be a mountain, the crooked place still be crooked, and the rough place still rough. What need have we, then, to be looking up to the Lord, that he would manifest Himself in love to our soul!

III. Now comes the solemn declaration from the Lord's own mouth--"And all flesh shall see it together." I take the word "flesh" in two senses. "All flesh," in its widest signification, comprehends all who are in the flesh; that is, all the sons and daughters of Adam. "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance unto all men in that he has raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). In this sense, "all flesh" shall see the glory of God; that is, at the day of judgment, the great day of account, they shall see the glory of God in his justice, who do not see the glory of God in his mercy. "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?" When the glory of the Lord shall be revealed--when Christ shall come with all his saints--when he shall sit upon the great white throne, and gather all nations before him, shall not all flesh then see him? As we read--"Every eye shall see him and they also who pierced him." When the dead, small and great, stand before God--when the books are opened, and the dead are "judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works" (Rev. 20:12), the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it. An incarnate God shall sit upon the throne of judgment; and those who have lived and died in their sins shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. But they shall call in vain; for the indignant Majesty of heaven shall

blaze forth in a million flashes of lightning, and they shall hear their sentence pealed in the tones of a million thunders. And thus "all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord," some to their eternal joy, and others to their everlasting sorrow.

But we may also understand the words "all flesh" as embracing, in a more limited sense, all the people of God in the flesh--the saints of the Most High now in their mortal bodies, who are still encompassed with all the sins and sorrows and infirmities of the flesh. The apostle, therefore, speaks of "living in the flesh," and "abiding in the flesh" (Phil. 1:22, 24), as expressing his continuance in the body. In this sense, the saints of God in their present time-state, in their mortal condition, before they pass from time into eternity, shall all see the glory of the Lord; there shall be a revelation of the glory of Christ to their souls, which they shall see below by faith, before they see it above by sight, face to face.

Now is not this what your soul is seeking after? And do you not find that without this you can get no solid rest nor peace? Is not your eye from time to time looking upward for some discovery of the glory of Christ to your soul? Is not your heart every now and then stretching itself up to the everlasting hills, that there may be some breaking in of heavenly light, some gracious discovery of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus? Are you not longing for some believing view of the Son of God--for some application of his atoning blood to your conscience--for some shedding abroad of his love to your soul--for some visitation of his Spirit and grace to your heart? Is all dark and dreary without the presence of Christ? Is all cold and lifeless unless you feel your heart in some measure, touched and softened by the word of his grace?

If you have ever seen anything of the glory of the Lord, you will want to see it again; if you have ever felt the presence of Christ, you will want to feel it again; and if you have ever known what his power can do, what his blood can save from, and what his Spirit can in a moment produce, you will want again and again a renewal of this heavenly blessing, that you may have a firm and solid evidence of your saving interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, have every guilty doubt and fear chased away, and your whole soul filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

IV. But I now come to my last point, the ratification that God has given that all these things shall most surely come to pass--"The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." More than seven hundred years before Christ came into the world, God spoke these words by his servant Isaiah, and he fulfilled what he spoke. The son of God did come in the flesh; the glory of the Lord was revealed; and all flesh did see it together by the miracles that he wrought, the gracious words that he spoke, the holy life that he lived, and the suffering death which, according to the clear language of prophecy, he died. But in a more special manner did those behold his glory "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Not one jot or one tittle of God's word can pass away. The word that is gone out of his mouth in righteousness shall not return void. And this word the mouth of the Lord has spoken for your consolation, you saints of God, you children of the Most High. You are waiting for the Lord to appear to your soul "more than those who watch for the morning." Often in the night season are you looking up to his blessed Majesty, that he would himself speak a healing, reconciling, comforting word with power to your heart. Many an inward sigh, cry, and groan come up to him whose ears are ever open, and many a secret prayer is spread out before these holy and gracious eyes which neither slumber nor sleep. You may often, left to yourselves, have to grope in darkness--thick, Egyptian darkness, that may be felt; but that very darkness makes you feel your need of light. The cry of the Church has always been--"Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us."

You may often feel as if immersed in the very shadow of death, and say with Heman--"I am counted with those who go down into the pit; I am a man that has no strength" (Psalm 88:4); but the very feelings of death--the chill at your heart, and the cold sweat upon your brow--make you long for the appearance of him who is the Resurrection and the Life; and who can in one moment whisper--"Fear not; I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death."

You may be pressed down at times with the power of unbelief, and think and say there never was a heart like yours, so unable to believe, so doubting at every step; but this deep conviction of your wretched unbelief, which is the Spirit's work to show (John 16:9), only makes you long for that living faith of which Christ himself is not only the Object, but the Author and Finisher.

You may be sunk at times in despondency, as to both your present and future state; but that makes you the more desire to have a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.

You may feel at times the guilt, and not only the guilt, but the dreaded power and prevalence of sin; but that only makes you long the more earnestly for manifestations of pardon and peace, and that no sin may have dominion over you. "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it," that sooner or later you shall have every needful blessing. The valley you now feel shall be exalted; the mountain and hill shall be made low--the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and your eyes shall see the glory of the Lord Christ shall be made precious to your heart; he will come sooner or later into your soul; and then when he comes he will manifest himself as your Lord and your God. And so you keep hanging, and hoping, and looking up until he appears; for your heart is still ever saying, "None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good."

Here, then, we must leave it in his gracious hands who has not said unto the seed of Jacob--"Do you seek me in vain?" "Has he said, and shall he not do it; has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

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