

The Beauty and Strength of Zion

by John Owen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of considering the means of the church's preservation and protection, and trusting in the Lord for guidance and deliverance.

Duration: 54:20

Scripture: Psalm 48:1-4, Psalm 48:12-14, Isaiah 8:9-10, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:10, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Audio Books"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses five questions regarding the protection and preservation of the church. The preacher begins by giving an illustration of how massive and impenetrable New York City looks from the air, comparing it to the strength and majesty of the church. The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing and understanding our enemies' mistaken perception of our condition, as it encourages courage and faith. The preacher urges believers to find their security and identity in the concerns of Zion, rather than the world, and to trust in the promise of Christ and the watchful eye of God. The sermon concludes by highlighting the need to pass on this testimony of the church's protection and preservation to future generations.

Transcript

Scripture reading for this evening is Psalm 48. Psalm 48. A song or psalm for the sons of Korah.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together, they saw it, and so they marveled, they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind, as we have heard, so have we seen it, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.

God will establish it forever. We have thought of Thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple. According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise.

Unto the ends of the earth, Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let Mount Zion rejoice. Let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Thy judgments.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her. Tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks.

Consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide, even unto death.

Here ends the reading of God's word. We have a sermon this evening based on the scripture that we read tonight, Psalm 48, verses 12 through 14. Walk about Zion, and go round about her.

Tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks. Consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following.

For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide, even unto death. And before we start with reading the sermon, I'd like to give an illustration to help to understand this message.

And the illustration is this. I saw some pictures a few weeks ago of a trip that Jonathan and David Hogmood took to New York City, and they actually flew on a helicopter and did sightseeing of New York City from a helicopter. And for me, looking at the pictures, it was very remarkable how much you could see of the whole city of New York, particularly of Manhattan Island, with its rivers surrounding the land, and how massive New York City looks from the air, having buildings, all blocks and blocks of buildings, miles and miles of building, Central Park in the middle.

But just from the air, how remarkable New York City looks, all those buildings, how majestic, how, you would say, impenetrable such a city is, because all those buildings being 30, 40, 50 stories high, it's massive. That's an easy way to see New York City. You can go miles to the north, east, west.

You can go all around it. And that's what the text says here. Walk about Zion and go around and tell the towers thereof.

We did look at a picture of lower Manhattan. My wife said, where was the World Trade Center in that picture? Well, we had to kind of guess, because it's not there anymore. And so you see what a striking thing that is, such a massive city seeming so indestructible, and yet two of the largest buildings completely destroyed and ruined.

And that's striking, isn't it? That strikes at the very center of us as a country, too, that something so massive and great could so easily and quickly be ruined. It calls to us, doesn't it, that we have here no continuing city. You see, New York City, and even if you go to Shanghai, China, which is bigger, and Dubai, which is bigger still, you go to all those cities, and the Lord Jesus said that one day not one stone upon another.

That was the temple he spoke of. It came to pass. And so in all our cities as well, there's nothing continuing.

And therefore Abraham, it says, he sought for a city whose builder and maker was the Lord. It can be depressing and discouraging, I suppose, for young people, too, when they look at something so glamorous and hopeful and expectant as such a glittering city as that, than to realize that one day it will all be destroyed and ruined. And even in our days, where is Babylon? Where is Rome? They're all gone.

Because there's really only one city that's to come. It's the heavenly Jerusalem. It's the city of this chapter.

And so the sermon is regarding the beauty and strength of Zion, the heavenly city of God. I read the text to you, so we'll begin the sermon. Many expositors think this psalm to be a triumphant song of thanksgiving after some great deliverance in Jerusalem.

Some apply it to the times of Asa, when Zerah and the Ethiopians came with an army against Jerusalem of 100,000 men. Others apply it to the times of Jehoshaphat, when the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites were gathered together against Judah. And others, again, to the days of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib and his army came against Jerusalem and were destroyed.

They ground their interpretation upon verses 4 through 6, where it says, Lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together, they sought, but they could come no further. And so they marveled, they were troubled and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail.

Which is a description of some great consternation that befell the enemies of God and the enemies of Jerusalem when they drew near unto it. So the Jews do interpret these verses, walk about Zion and go round about her, tell the towers thereof, marquee well her bulwarks, consider her palaces. That now withstanding this great and dreadful attempt, whether by the Ethiopians or by the Moabites or Sennacherib, there is not one tower broken down of Zion or of Jerusalem, but all things are safe and well.

For my own part, I should rather judge this psalm to be composed by David and purely mystical and prophetic. It is easy to manifest that all the foregoing psalms are so. And the close of the former psalm is the calling of the Gentiles, where he saith, God reigneth over the heathen, God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness, verse 8. And in verse 9, you read, in the margin of your Bibles, better than in the text, the voluntary of the people are gathered unto the people of the God of Abraham.

The people are become a willing people in the day of his power. However, all conclude that these words are a graphical description of the defense that God will at all times give his church, which the psalmist sets before our eyes. Look upon it and observe what a diligent view he requires to be taken of what he here proposes.

He looks upon Zion as a well-fortified garrison, not like to be carried in haste by the enemy. And he would have you well consider, too, what the fortifications are. Therefore, he distributes his direction into so many particulars.

Walk about Zion, he says. This is the way whereby you may come to see how Zion is fortified. It may be you have gone a little way in walking and have seen much, but do not cease.

Go round about her and see if you can find one weak place where she is likely to be attacked by the enemy. Tell the towers or count up the numbers of them and see that they are not a few, which is what a man of judgment and understanding would do if he were to take a view of a fortified place and consider whether it would hold out against a strong enemy. Mark ye well her bulwarks or set your heart to her bulwarks.

Consider them. Do not take a general view of these fortifications of Zion, but ponder and consider whether they are likely to hold out or not and whether you may put your trust in them. Consider her palaces, which were the great and eminent buildings in and about Zion, called in some places palaces of ivory, with which they were greatly adorned, so that here is this direction given, to take a very strict, sedate, considerate view of the fortifications of Zion, since it would certainly be attacked by great and powerful enemies.

There are two things added. One is the particular end wherefore they should do so, that ye may tell it to the generation following. Since other ages of the church would have the use of it, the other is the ground why all this should be of benefit to them and the generation following.

For this God is our God in covenant, and that forever and ever, and will be our guide unto death. I shall make one observation from the words and speak a little very briefly and plainly to it. And this is the observation.

A diligent consideration of the means of the protection of the church in the greatest dangers and difficulties is a duty incumbent on us for our own support against sinful fears and to enable us to that testimony which is required for future generations to encourage them to trust in the Lord. Every age is to give over a good testimony of God's dealing with Zion to the age that comes after. And a diligent search and inquiry into the means of the protection and preservation of the church of God in the midst of eminent dangers and difficulties is a duty incumbent upon us that we may be fortified against sinful fears in ourselves and encourage succeeding generations to trust in the Lord.

As we have received the testimony of such who have gone before us, so we are to give our testimony to those who shall come after. And all that I shall do at present is to answer these five questions. Five questions.

What is to be understood by the protection of the church? Second question. What is meant by considering the means of the church's preservation? And from the text, walk about Zion, tell her towers, set your heart to her bulwarks, consider her palaces, etc. And the third question.

What are those means of the church's protection? Those towers and bulwarks which will not fail whenever Zerah or Sennacherib comes or whatever attempts are made upon Zion. And fourthly, what reason is there why we should thus consider these causes of the church's protection? And fifthly, what is the testimony which we have to give concerning this matter to the ensuing generation? And that is that we may declare it to the generation to come. So five questions.

What is to be understood by the protection of the church? What is meant by considering the means of the church's preservation? Third, what are those means of the church's protection? Fourth, what reason is there why we should thus consider these causes of the church's protection? And fifth, what is the testimony which we are to give concerning this matter? First, then, what is that protection of Zion, the church of God, that we may expect? First, it's the eternal salvation of the church of God. This is the goal and the prize that all of this great running is about in the world. Satan is, in his own nature, as active and restless as he is malicious.

And yet, I suppose, if this end were taken away, if this was not in his eye, that is, the eternal salvation of the church and of all that believe, he would give himself much more leisure than he does. All things here, evils, trials, persecutions, and the like, are but skirmishes. But where does eternal bliss? But where goes eternal bliss, there goes the victory.

This, therefore, is part of that preservation and safety of Zion, which we are to look after, namely, as the apostle says, that all Israel shall be saved. You have a great security that our Lord Jesus Christ gives of it in John 10, verse 27, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. I and my Father are one.

This is the first thing in the church's preservation, namely, that let the conflict be never so great, never so severe. All true believers shall be eternally saved. And if we do not lay the principal weight in our thoughts upon this, or concern in other things, our concern in other things will be of no moment unto us.

There is one false opinion does more mischief to the honor of God and the world in this matter than all the devils in hell are able to do, and that is of the total and final apostasy of true believers. For if that be so, we have lost our very first principles of the preservation of Zion, namely, that all Israel shall be saved, and that none shall take believers out of the hands of Christ. And secondly, there is this in it also, that there shall be a church, a professing church, preserved in the world throughout all generations, in despite of all the opposition of Satan and the world.

That is, there shall be a called number yielding obedience internally unto Christ and openly professing that obedience, always preserved unto the end of the world. It is expressly included in that promise that we read in Isaiah 9, verse 7. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

However, it may fall in particular places and nations, yet Zion will be preserved. God will reserve for Jesus Christ a church visibly professing and yielding obedience unto him, according to the gospel. It is good to keep our faith and experience within bounds, that we do not look for more than is like to come to pass, and yet still to have our faith confirmed in those things that may be sure not to fail.

All Israel shall be saved, and Christ will maintain his kingdom in the world against all opposition. That is, the cause wherein we are engaged, whatsoever becomes of our persons, will be triumphant. Believers shall be saved, and a professing church shall be preserved.

And God, it may be, has placed us in this age to give over our testimony to the future generation. And thirdly, there belongs to the preservation of the church the protection and deliverance of the true church of God under persecution. This likewise comes within the compass of these fortifications.

We are very apt to look after our own concerns, and it may be to imagine we are more concerned in this third head than in both the former. But those that think so make a very wrong judgment, for the measure of all our concerns in present deliverance or in the conflicts of the church is to be taken from these two generals, or general heads, the eternal salvation of the church at last and the preservation of the kingdom of Christ in this world. And if once we begin to measure them by our own advantage, peace, liberty, or friends, we shall take wrong measures of God's providence and of our own expectation.

There are three seasons, or three ways, whereby churches in particular times and places are in danger of coming short of this protection or seeming so to do. And one way they come short is when the power of Satan in the world are set upon them in the way of persecution. And secondly, when the nations of the world among whom they live are so wicked that God will not forbear a general devastation and destruction.

And thirdly, when themselves apostatize and decay and provoke God to remove his candlestick from among them. In such seasons it comes to a trial whether a church in any particular place shall be preserved and protected in their present trial or not. And I confess unto you that my thoughts are that all three are upon us at present, which makes our case the more difficult and hard to be determined.

But this, I bless God, I cannot but think that what we most fear is least to be feared. It is plain we most fear the first, which was persecution, and I think I am certain that the first is least to be feared. The third danger, which is our own apostasy, there is not anything in the world that we ought to be more afraid of than of a church's scattering in an apostatizing condition.

Then we shall bear the burden of our own guilt in our scattering and be completely taken off from all means of retrieving it. But there is an interest of all particular churches walking with God in this preservation and protection that is here promised and described to be round about Zion, and it is an act of mere sovereignty where God deals otherwise with them. That is the protection of the church in answer to the first question.

The second question is, what is it to consider the causes and means of this protection? What shall we look for? Where shall we look for it? To answer this, I say, be sure to take off your search and consideration from those things which are not and will not prove to be bulwarks of Zion. You know how they were blamed in such a case, in Isaiah 22, verse 8, in a time of great distress and invasion that was coming upon them. The prophet tells you what the people did.

He discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armor of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many, and ye gathered together waters of the lower pool, and ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool, but ye have not looked unto the maker of thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

That's a quote from Isaiah 22, verse 8. Looking unto carnal aids and helps in difficulties has been our folly. The first thing in this call to look to Zion is to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for whereof is he to be accounted? So secondly, where shall we look for these bulwarks? We must look for the protection of the church, where we look for the destruction of its adversaries, and where shall we look for that? The prophet tells us in Isaiah 34, verse 16, Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read, No one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate, for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. All the foregoing prophecy is concerning the utter destruction of Idumea in the type, but of Babylon, Rome, Antichrist as the antitype.

And he expresses the gathering of all the fowls of the prey, dismal fowls, dismal fowls, birds, to dwell in the place, but how shall we know whether this will come to pass, says the prophet? Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read, No one of these shall fail, that is, no one particular judgment that God hath threatened in this whole book against his adversaries shall ever fail, no, not in one circumstance, neither the cormorant nor the screeching owl shall want her mate. Seek it out of the book of the Lord, you will find it recorded in these prophecies, and nothing shall fail there, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and the spirit of the Lord shall accomplish it. We are to look, therefore, and search for these defenses, causes and means of the protection of Zion in the book of the Lord.

This is the tower of David, where hang a thousand shields, all shields of mighty men, Song of Solomon 4, verse 4, where is recorded all the defense of the church and people of God. It is your duty to search in the book of God and read, to see what are the causes and means of the protection and preservation of the church, and when you have found them out, you are then to consider them. Lack of consideration weakens our faith greatly.

If you can find, by reading in the book of God, that there are such and such defenses and bulwarks of Zion, our duty is now to consider whether they will hold out against the greatest attacks and attempts of Satan and all our adversaries. I speak what is plain, but very fit for this day. When you have found out these defenses, bring them to the shield of faith and obedience to God, and consider whether they are like to hold out.

Consider each and give judgment upon them, and if you judge they are so, then trust to them. Drive all you have, all your concerns, within the compass of these fortifications, and trust to them. And this may suffice to answer the second question, where are we to search for the protection of the church? So the second question was where are we to search, and that was in the book of God, the Bible.

Now the third question, what are the means, so after we have searched, what are the means of the preservation of Zion and protection of the church that we are to search out and to consider and trust unto? It is but a little I can comply with the text in. I cannot go round about Zion, I cannot tell her towers, but we will consider some of her bulwarks that will be a sure preservation against all opposition, and I will name four or five unto you. First, the designation and constitution of Jesus Christ to be king of the church, king of Zion, is a great bulwark of Zion, so that Jesus Christ is the king of the church, that he is the king of Zion, this is a bulwark.

This is the fort royale that never fails, Psalm 2. Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? 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 cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Notwithstanding all this tumult, conspiracy and rage, all these counsels and advices, yet, saith he, Zion must stand, for I have set my king.

I have anointed Christ, my eternal Son, to be king upon my holy hill of Zion. But though Christ be made king, it does not follow that he may give over reigning, and so there will be no security from hence. The truth is, he will do so.

He will give over reigning as to his mediatory kingdom, but not before he has done with all his enemies. Psalm 110, verse 1, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. And the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 15, He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

And when he shall have put down all power and authority, then he shall give up the kingdom. The great security of the church is from hence, that Christ is made king of Zion. And if he be a king, he must have subjects.

The word is his law. He rules by his spirit. But rule and law together will not make a kingdom, unless there be subjects to yield obedience.

If Christ be a king, if he sit upon Zion, the church must be preserved, for he must have a kingdom. There is but one way in the world that looks probable to put an end to Christ's reign, and that is to cease being his enemies. For the express terms of his reign is, Till all his enemies be made his footstool.

How easy were it for me to dwell upon this, that this king of the church has power to preserve it to all ends and in all circumstances, power to preserve it to eternal salvation, invisible profession, in particular trials.

And what king is there among men that will not preserve his subjects in time of trial, when it is in his power so to do? The Lord Christ will preserve them. I give unto them eternal life, and no man shall take them out of my hands.

He is able to save them to the utmost, even all that come unto God by him. And he is given to be head over all things to the church, to dispose of all as seems good unto him, for the end, use, and interest of the church. This is the first bulwark and security we have for the preservation and protection of the church.

And unless men can dethrone Jesus Christ and cast him off from being king upon the holy hill of Zion, it is in vain to think of prevailing against Zion. The second bulwark of Zion is the promises of God, which are innumerable. I will name but two of them.

One is the foundation of the Old Testament and the other of the New Testament. One held it out for 4,000 years and was never impeached, and the other for the 1,600 years, or we could say 2,000 years, and shall never be shaken. The promise that was the foundation of the Old Testament was the first promise of God, Genesis 3, verse 15.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. There are these four things in that promise.

So here's four things in the promise. Listen close. First, that there shall always be a twofold seed in the world, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

They shall never fail while this world stands. Now the second thing about this promise, that these two seeds shall always be at enmity. There shall be an everlasting conflict from the entrance of sin to the end of it.

I will put enmity, saith God, and such enmity as shall be carried on by the highest and most severe warfare. The enmity is spiritual, but the warfare oftentimes is outward. The first manifestation of this enmity was in blood.

Cain slew Abel. Why? Because he was of the evil one, and so it hath been carried on by blood from that day to this. And now the third thing in this promise, that either seed hath a leader.

Both seeds have a leader. There is he and thou, it and thou, that is Christ and Satan. Christ is the leader of the seed of the woman, the captain and head of it in this great conflict.

And Satan, as he was the head of the apostasy from God, continues the head of his seed, the generation of vipers, to try out the contest with Christ unto the end. And now the fourth thing in this promise, the victory shall always be to the seed of the woman. It is said, indeed, thou shalt bruise his heel.

Christ's heel is his sufferings, both in his own person and those of the church. But on the contrary, it is said, likewise, he shall bruise thy head, break your power and strength, conquer you. Then Zion is safe.

This was the foundation of the Old Testament, and though things oftentimes were brought to great distress, sometimes by apostasy and sometimes by persecution, yet this promise carried it and delivered over the church safe into the hand of Christ. Now when Christ takes the church and goes to new form it, and fashion it more for the glory of God, there is the foundation promise made in the New Testament. Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16, verse 18. If that obscure promise under the Old Testament did secure Zion, as to all those things before mentioned 4,000 years, shall not we trust to this promise of our Savior for half the time? Though it is indeed the continuance of the same promise, for the gates of hell is the seed of the serpent, and the rock is Christ, that is the second bulwark of Zion. We may be shaken in our faith and confidence, but we have the promise of God that hath supported it thus far in the world, and will certainly preserve it to the end.

Now thirdly, the third bulwark, there is the watchful providence of God over the church. It is expressed in Deuteronomy 11, verse 12, where the land of the church is said to be a land which the Lord thy God careth for. The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year.

That land, which is the possession of the church, the seed of God's worship, the church itself, is what the Lord careth for. And it is expressed again to the same purpose in Isaiah 27, verse 3, where the land is called God's vineyard. I, the Lord, do keep it.

I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day. There is the watchful providence of God over the church, night and day preserving it, which providence indeed we live upon, though it is secret and invisible to us.

There is power in it, but God hides his power. We see little. We are not able to discern anything to purpose of the secret emanation of divine power and wisdom through the hearts and counsels of all mankind.

To this end, that God may preserve his church, governing their affections, ruling their thoughts, turning and overturning their counsels, things that will never appear nor come to light. What was their occasion and ends till the great day when the thoughts of all hearts shall be discovered. The Lord will keep and preserve his church, that none may hurt it.

Now forth another bulwark is God's special presence. God is in a special manner present in his church. I have treated concerning the nature and special presence of God and Christ in the church and proved it from many promises and showed the effect of it, which I shall now insist upon, but not now insist upon, but only show that this is a bulwark of the church.

In Isaiah 8, verse 9 and 10, there is a gauntlet thrown out to all the adversaries of the people of God and a challenge to do their worst. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces. And give ear, all ye of far countries.

Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught. Speak the word, and it shall not stand.

What is the reason? For God is with us. The presence of God is with his church. Everything of force, of counsel, of association and agreement, all shall be broken and come to naught.

They shall have no effect. And he gives this only reason, because God is with us. While God is with his church, it may be exercised with great trials, so that they may think they have lost the presence of God.

As you read in Judges 6, verse 12, it says, The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said unto him, The Lord is with thee. O my Lord, saith he, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? Whence is all this evil come upon us, that we should be under the power of the Midianites, oppressed and

destroyed by them? He could not believe that if God was with them, according to his promise, they could be so prevailed upon by their enemies. Great things of trouble may befall the church of God, while God is present with them.

So as they may be ready to say sometimes, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God. The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. It cannot be, saith Gideon, that God is with us, if we be thus ruined.

But he will appear and manifest himself for the protection of Zion. The last bulwark unto which all others may be reduced is the covenant of God. For this God is our God.

That God, who hath fortified Zion in all other generations and wrought these deliverances, he is our God in covenant. I shall not need to reckon any more than these five bulwarks of the church, ponder and consider whether they are like to work out its preservation and protection. And if God gives us wisdom to single out these things and consider them a right, we shall soon see what encouragement we have to pray for the preservation and protection of the church, however it may be attacked and attempted even this day, which is our present business.

Now the fourth question. Why should we make this inquiry into these causes and means of the preservation and protection of the church? Why should we make this inquiry or why ask these questions? The reason is to deliver ourselves from our own sinful fears and thereby a discovery of the great mistake which all the adversaries of the church run upon. The reason why the ground whereupon they attempt to harm the church is that and no other which you have in Ezekiel 36, verse 11 and 12.

Thus saith the Lord God, it shall come to pass that in the same time shall things come into thy mind and thou shalt think an evil thought and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages. I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls and having neither bars nor gates. Here is the very ground of the undertaking of the world against the church in any age, that they have no defense, that they are poor people that dwell in unwalled villages and have neither bars nor gates.

It is a miserable disappointment for men to go and undertake to destroy or oppress any place thinking they are provided and when they come there to find it quite otherwise, that they are unprovided or unprotected and when they come there to find it quite otherwise. At this day there would not any move a tongue against the people of God, but upon this very account that they have no defense, no protection and sometimes they proceed as far as they begin to discover the bulwarks of Zion, if not in the causes yet in the effects. The old world saw not God in the cause of what he did, but when the waters began to roll upon them, the psalmist tells us they saw it and were afraid and fearfulness took hold upon them.

Is this the people that dwell in unwalled villages that have neither bars nor gates? See their towers! Behold their bulwarks! There is no attacking them. When once God makes them to see this, that the power of Christ is engaged for his people, they will then cry to the mountains and to the rocks to hide them. From the day of his wrath they will be surprised with fear.

Now seeing the adversaries of the church of God are certainly upon this mistake attempting the church or attempting to destroy the church because as they imagine it has no guard and they will certainly find at last that they have a guard which they saw not and were not acquainted with, why should we be afraid in such a case? Nothing more encourages persons than when they know their enemies do clearly mistake their condition. This is enough to make the greatest coward in the world valiant. Let us be sure to be found

within this garrison and place of defense and certain that we have to do in the concerns of Zion and not of the world.

And then shall we see the mountains all full of chariots and horses of fire round about us, Christ reigning, the promise of Christ engaged, and the watchful eye of God upon the church continually. Our fears arise from the lack of considering these things and taking a carnal view and measure of things that are seen. And now for the last question.

What testimony are we to give over to the generation that is to come after us? What is the testimony that we are to give? This testimony consists of two things. First, the exercise of faith and patience in all our own trials that may befall us, that there may be a remembrance of it in the generations that are to come. The martyrs that suffered here so long ago do still tell us in this generation, so this is in England, the martyrs who suffered in England long ago do still tell us in this generation by their faith and patience that Zion had walls and bulwarks round about her and that God was her God and guide.

Had they not believed it, do you think they would have given up their bodies to the flames in the city and other parts of the nation? In like manner, that faith and patience which we shall exercise in any trial that may befall us on the behalf of Zion is to tell the generation to come what God hath done and how we have found it ourselves. It is our duty to give it over by instruction to those that we bring up, so not only to live in a way of faith and patience but also to give it over by way of instruction to those that we bring up. Our fathers have told us what God did in their days and we are to give in this testimony to God to tell our children what God hath done in our days.

So long have we lived and been professors, so long have we walked in Zion, and we have found God faithful in his promises. Not one word or tittle has failed that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Thus are we to instruct the generation that is growing up that hath not seen those things which we have seen.

Amen. Let us pray. Most gracious God of Zion, the God who delights to dwell there, who cherishes thy Zion and preserves it, who loves her well, O Lord, we come to thee and beseech thee that thou wilt hear us and be with us.

O Lord, we confess our need and we also confess that we don't deserve any mercy of thine, and yet we plead for it. For thou art a king, O Lord Jesus Christ, and without a subject no king remains a king, and therefore we beseech thee and we plead with thee, O Lord Jesus, take us as subjects of thine, make us of thy kingdom, and fulfill all thy promises, where thou hast given such a word of promise that he that seeks thee shall find thee, that he that knocks the door shall be opened. O Lord, we beseech thee, teach us to plead, to pray of thee, and O Lord, if thou go not with us, carry us not up hence, O we need thy presence and thy nearness.

And O Lord, in such a way we beseech thee, give us praying hearts, and thou wilt be in our midst, and thou wilt bless us in our families, and therefore, O Lord, then we will tell and testify to the generation to come thy glory and thy goodness, thy wonderful works in thy church and in thy kingdom. O Lord, make us a testimony. We beseech thee, grant that faith in our hearts that we need to be patient and to be trusting in thee, to be testifying with an open mouth of thy goodness and glory.

O Lord, we pray for that. Bless this sermon for that end, that we would be a congregation that tells to the generation to come thy wonders and thy goodness, and therefore, we pray, too, for the preservation of all our young people and children, that they might be living members of thy church, wherever they are, and

whatever thou dost call them to be or do, O Lord, make them living members, so that they will know what it means to be preserved unto eternal life. O Lord, hear us, dismiss us with thy blessing, go with us in this week and provide for us every day, supply for our children in their schoolwork.

We pray for fathers in their workplaces, mothers in the home, everyone who has their calling in life. O Lord, bless us with help from above. Give help in lonely times, when we suffer and we are in want.

O Lord, we pray for grace to look to Jesus, the King of the church. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/23/SID23737.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-owen/the-beauty-and-strength-of-zion/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net