

The Lamb and His Company

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, as the head of the Church, and the Church's relationship with Him as a body of believers redeemed and perfected in union with Him.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 11:28, Mark 9:24, John 10:27, John 14:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 12:22, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Peter 1:19, Revelation 14:1

Topics: "Redemption Through Christ", "Heavenly Worship"

Description

THOMAS BRADBURY preaches about the blessed privilege of being united with the Lamb on Mount Zion, reserved by the Father's grace, rejoicing in Him alone, redeemed by His blood, restrained by His love, and ultimately beholding His face in righteousness. The sermon delves into the marvellous unfolding of Divine truth, revealing a select society consecrated to follow the Lamb wherever He goes, singing a new song before the throne. The redeemed are described as virgins, symbolizing their purity and spiritual chastity, following the Lamb in a spiritual sense, and standing without fault before the throne of God, clothed in His righteousness.

Transcript

by THOMAS BRADBURY - Preached in Grove Chapel, Camberwell, Sunday Morning, May 4th, 1879

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." (Revelation 14:1-3)

It is a blessed privilege to be able to sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also, that glorious hymn of old John Kent's, with which we commenced this morning's service. It is an unspeakable mercy to experience spiritual oneness with the company described therein, and to know, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that we have a place and a position upon Mount Zion, in union with the Lamb, utterly unknown to the world, into the enjoyment of which formalists, Pharisees, and mere professors can never enter.

It is our lot this morning, in humble dependence upon the gracious guidance of the glorifier of the Father's Christ, to seek a little instruction, comfort, and edification from the portion I have read by way of text in its

connection down to the end of the 5th verse. There we have a marvellous unfolding of Divine truth, upon which those who are spiritual among us love to feed; a precious revelation of select society in the midst of which we desire to be found, and a glorious description of consecrated ground, which many of us are sometimes privileged to tread.

We will look at the subject according to the following arrangement,

THE RESERVE The Lamb and His company.

THEIR REJOICING "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps."

THEIR REGENERATION "And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders."

THEIR REDEMPTION "And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."

THEIR RESTRAINT "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins."

THEIR RECTITUDE "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."

I. THE RESERVE "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." The first words of this gracious revelation of God's mind sets forth the diligence with which His child seeks for fresh unfoldings of His mind and will concerning His people. John had been blessed with a glorious revelation of God's Christ, according to the description given in the first chapter, where he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. And I turned to see the voice that spake unto me. And being turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the papas with a golden girdle." He then gives a glorious description of the mediatorial perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ and the overpowering effect the sight had upon him. "And when I saw Him," that very One upon whose breast he had leaned at supper, with whom he had held gracious intercourse, and had been blessed with hallowed familiarity; the sight of Him in His exaltation was so glorious that, as John states, "I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen." Now if you look throughout this Book of Revelation you will find John looking again and again. It matters not if he be sent down into the deep like Jonah, and shut out from the presence of His God, he will look and look again. If he be on the mount of covenant favour, rejoicing in the blessed experience of the love, compassion, and sympathy of His risen Lord, he looks again.

"And I looked, and, lo." The sight was astonishing and astounding to the spiritual apprehension and understanding of John. "A Lamb stood on the Mount Sion." In every portion of this book of Revelation where the word "Lamb" occurs, it appears as a diminutive, meaning "a little Lamb," in contrast to the great wild beast. Yet He appears in His glorious sovereignty in the midst of the throne. Turn to chapter 5:6, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of

God sent forth into all the earth." Here we see the Lamb, small in the eyes and estimation of men, but everything in the eye and heart of His Father. "He was," and is "despised and rejected of men," yet He is in the midst of the throne reigning and ruling over all men, events, and circumstances. Though men say, "We will not have this Lamb to reign over us," they cannot live, or move, or have their being independently of Him. Why this mysterious disparity? That His hidden and inquiring disciples may be taken by Him into a desert place, privately, and enjoy the sweet revelation of these things which He withholds from others. Through a never-ending eternity He will appear before His ransomed and adoring worshippers as the meek and lowly One who, in the days of His flesh, learned how to sympathize with them in all their afflictions, infirmities, and necessities. You can see Him revealed thus in various portions of God's blessed Word. Look, for instance, at Matthew 25:31, where He is described as coming in His glory, with all the holy angels, and sitting upon the throne of His glory to dispose of all nations according to His sovereign will and good pleasure. The title given Him here is not, God, or the Son of God; but "the Son of Man." "When the Son of man shall come in His glory; "all the glory with which He was invested as Mediator of the covenant before all worlds. Glorious sight! The Son of Man, and yet the Son of God. The lowly Man, and the mighty God in one person. Why is this? For the confronting and confounding of all His people's foes, and for the comfort, consolation, and encouragement of all those who in union with Him are despised and rejected of men. We oftentimes derive sweet encouragement from the blessed truth that He who at this very moment fills the throne of the universe is Man as well as God. Hart beautifully expresses this glorious fact,

"A man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side.
His human heart He still retains,
Though throned in highest bliss,
And feels each tempted member's pains
For our affliction's His."

He is the glorious Man who understands all the aches, pains, infirmities, ignorances, wants, necessities, sufferings, and sorrows of His poor pilgrim people here below. He is the Man who was in all points tempted like unto them, yet without sin. He is the Man who will succour all His tempted ones in the wilderness, and will come in His glory to present all His jewels of election-love to the Father, perfect and complete in Himself. He is the God-Man who will be crowned with glory and honour before assembled worlds, when the Father will acknowledge the perfection of His service in the preservation, salvation, and glorification of every sheep and lamb committed to His care before the worlds were framed. But this will not be all. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2) They shall sit with Him in His throne, and unite with Him in that awful denunciation, "Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41) And as the smoke of the torment of the lost rises up for ever and ever, "the four-and-twenty elders, and the four living creatures fall down and worship God that sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia." (Rev. 19:3,4) Yes, eternal praises for His judgments, as well as for His mercies, shall ascend to Jehovah from the rejoicing hearts of all His glorified ones before His

throne.

"And, lo, a Lamb." Peter speaks of this blessed One, as, "a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who, verily, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for all who by Him do believe in God." (1 Pet. 1:19-21) He was the Lamb of the Father's choice and appointment, in whom no flaw or defect could ever be found. He was given as a sacrifice for His people; and of Him His true worshippers can sing, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:7,8) Pray, why did God choose to reveal His dear Son under the figure of a lamb? To set forth in a preeminent manner His innocence, meekness, gentleness, kindness, compassion, and love. There is no creature of God's forming so harmless and inoffensive as the lamb. It will receive injuries, but will inflict none. Its fleece clothes the naked. Its flesh feeds the hungry: in life and death it is highly prized. In all these points we see the Lamb of God set forth for our clothing, food, and delight. In His righteousness, the obedience of His sinless life, we are clothed, and we rejoice to know that His "flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed." "Without spot or blemish" the Lord Jesus Christ ever stands in the eye of the Father. In Him all the perfections of grace and glory shine, and all these are made over to all those who are blessed with eternal identification with Him. We see this in that testimony of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:17, "But he that is joined to the Lord is spiritually one with Him." Then, all the Lamb was in covenant for them before the worlds were framed, all that He did for them during His sojourn here upon earth, and all that He is in the Father's estimation in glory, shall be theirs in spiritual possession throughout the countless ages of eternity. It is all of His grace that we know that not all the transgressions, sins, and iniquities they commit, nor the sorrows, sufferings, and tribulations they endure can ever affect the estimation in which they are held by the Father's eternally loving heart.

Having accomplished His redeeming work, triumphed over His people's enemies, and presented to His Father a spotless righteousness for them, the Lamb is graciously pleased to bless them with spiritual association, fellowship, and intercourse with Himself. Far above all terrestrial things He has ascended, and having asserted His dominion and sovereignty over all things in heaven, and earth, and hell, He reveals Himself as the Victor over all the foes of His redeemed flock. Turn to the chap. 17:14, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Who are these enemies of the Lamb? Those who are occupied with earthly grandeur and pomp, have the Czar, the Sultan, and the Pope ever in their eyes; but we are taught to look nearer home. These, with all their pomp and splendor surrounding them, all the riches and affluence at their command, all the dominion and majesty they can boast of, are three of the most miserable wretches outside hell's gates. But it is not for me to be looking at carnal things like these. Throughout the metaphors of this Book I see spiritual truths abounding.

In the friends of the Lamb I see my friends, in His foes I see my foes. In this portion I see Infidels, Jews, Turks, Papists, Socinians, and Arminians, with Satan at their head, making war with the Lamb. Abel's death was not so much the act of Cain against his brother as it was the act of Satan against God's Christ. All the persecutions which have raged against the Church from Abel's days to the present, have been aimed at the Head through the members, and as assuredly as the Christ of God is exalted in your affections and mine, as assuredly as His name is known in your house and mine, as assuredly as His love is felt in your heart and mine, Satan and his armies will make war against Him in us.

Are we spiritually one with Him? His sufferings will abound in us, but our consolations will abound by Him. Do His enemies molest us? Blessed be His name; "the Lamb shall overcome them." I love that declaration, "The Lamb," not "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," shall overcome them. The precious truth set before us in this metaphor is, that love is ever the greatest conqueror. There is no victory appears so glorious and magnanimous as that of gentleness in union with a precious Christ.

If the children of the living God did but know the privileges which are theirs "in union with the Lamb," and their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, they would never resent insult with injury, nor persecution with petulance, but in patience they would possess their souls, and leave their foes to be dealt with by Him. The meek, the lowly, the kind, and gentle Lamb will overcome every enemy of His people. In my dealings with those who oppose me I can take no credit to myself.

Am I patient? It is the patience of Christ in me. Am I gentle? It is the gentleness of Christ shown by me. Am I loving? It is the love of Christ constraining me. The love of Him who is "Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

"Lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Zion." What is this Mount Zion? We read of Zion, the stronghold which David took as a refuge for the halt, the blind, the lame, and the maimed who were with him. In this we see a glorious type of the Church of God. In every portion of the Old Testament where Zion is mentioned, we have something of the blessedness of the Church described. See Joel 2:32, "In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." See this fulfilled in Acts 2:16-21. Turn to Obadiah 21: "And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Fulfilled in 1 Tim. 4:16. The New Testament is the key which unlocks, unfolds, and reveals the truths hidden in Old Testament types, shadows, and metaphors. See how God's Zion, God's Church, is set before us in Psalm 132:13,14: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Here I can see nothing but the salvation and security of elect and redeemed people of God. When I read, "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people trust in it," or "betake themselves unto it," (Isa. 14:32 I know that this is the Church of the living God. When I read in Psalm 133:3, "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore," I am persuaded it is the Church of the Firstborn. When I read in Psalm 2:6, "Yet have I anointed My King upon My holy hill of Zion," I see there the elect and redeemed people of God with Christ in their midst as God's anointed Prophet to counsel, guide, and instruct, God's anointed Priest to atone, intercede, and bless, and God's anointed King to reign over and in them by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are not left in doubt as to the truth of these things, for Paul appears to clear away all that may be vague and uncertain, and says, "But ye are come." Where from? From the darkness and gloom of Sinai to the light and glory of Zion. From condemnation and death to justification and life. From distance and desertion to the joys of God's presence and the smiles of His countenance. "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. 12:22-24)

Here, upon Mount Zion, upon consecrated ground, a select company appears. The delight and glory of this favoured company is the Lamb as it had been slain. As the redeemed stand, worshipping, and adoring Him, they have not only a reciprocity of enjoyment, but mutual possession of the privileges and immunities which the Father has conferred upon them in the Son of His love. Look at their number. "An hundred and

forty and four thousand." A definite number given to set forth an indefinite. This is given not so much in reference to the whole Church of the living God as to that portion of it, saved, redeemed, called, regenerated, and perfected "in union with the Lamb" up to the close of the Jewish dispensation, or God's elect amongst the Jews. You see the same number mentioned in chapter 7:4-8, "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." Come to verse 9: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." Elect Jews and Gentiles, "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." At your leisure read from the end of this seventh chapter to the commencement of the fourteenth, and you will find a record of the afflictions, persecutions, and privations experienced by the remnant, the one hundred and forty and four thousand, yet, according to the words of our text, not one is wanting. Let Satan hurl his fiery darts against the Church, not one member thereof shall be lost. Let earth and hell combine against the elect of God, not one of them shall be hurt or destroyed; not one of them shall be wanted in that glorious day when Jehovah-Jesus shall reckon up His jewels of election love. In His mind the number of them is definite, but in the minds of finite beings they form "a great multitude which no man can number."

"Having His Father's name written in their foreheads." What does this indicate? Property, peculiarity, and preciousness. In ancient times the commander of hosts branded his soldiers in the forehead that they might be known and distinguished from all others. In our days the possessor of silver plate and valuables has his own mark engraved upon them. Why? To distinguish them as his own personal property. So the whole company of the redeemed receive Jehovah's mark to signalize them as His own peculiar and precious property.

They are His by sovereign decree, creation, power, redemption price, and regeneration grace. They are a peculiar people to Him, and He is a God peculiar to them. He teaches them by His Spirit that they shall have none other God but Him. To them He makes an old covenant command a new covenant reality. The Father's name is seen in their foreheads where it can be seen, acknowledged, and feared. Is the name of the Father seen in your foreheads? Does a child-like spirit appear in your daily experience?

You remember the inscription upon the crown of the Jewish high priest, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." (Exo. 28:36; 39:30) Mark you, I say crown, not mitre. I do not like the term mitre. I will tell you why. I was staying with a dear old rector the other day, when he showed me a letter he had received from a would-be bishop. On the corner of the letter was the bishop's crest, a mitre. My heart sighed, "Poor fellow, the mark of the beast is upon him." I said to my dear old friend, "Do you remember giving me some few years ago a little picture representing the origin of the bishop's mitre?"

"I do," said he, "I wish you would ask John to copy a few of them for me." John has copied them, and off they are gone. What is the origin of the bishop's mitre? If you can, consult Hislop's "Two Babylons," Sixth Edition, page 350, where the writer says, "As the Pope bears the keys of Janus, so he wears the mitre of Dagon. The excavations of Nineveh have put this beyond all possibility of doubt. The Papal mitre is entirely different from the mitre of Aaron and the Jewish high priests.

That mitre was a turban. The two-horned mitre, which the Pope wears when he sits on the high altar at Rome and receives the adoration of the cardinals, is the very mitre worn by Dagon, the fish-god of the Philistines and Babylonians. There were two ways in which Dagon was anciently represented. The one was when he was depicted as half-man, half-fish, the upper part being entirely human, the under part ending in the tail of a fish. The other part was, when, to use the words of Layard, 'the head of the fish formed a mitre above that of the man, while its scaly, fan-like tail fell as a cloak behind, leaving the human limbs and feet exposed.'

Of Dagon in this form Layard gives a representation in his last work, which is here represented to the reader; and no one who examines his mitre, and compares it with the Pope's, as given in Elliott's 'Horoë,' can doubt for a moment that from that, and no other source, has the pontifical mitre been derived. The gaping jaws of the fish surmounting the head of the man at Nineveh are the unmistakable counterpart of the horns of the Pope's mitre at Rome. Thus it was in the East at least five hundred years before the Christian era."

This is true, and yet we have those who think they can stem the tide of Popery and Ritualism by mean of such tomfoolery. There must be something spiritual, unknown to the world and its men, to stem the tide of error, superstition, and idolatry. Nothing by God the Father's name, revealed in the person of the slain Lamb by the power of the Holy Ghost will avail for the confronting and confounding of the hosts of hell. The redeemed have the Father's name in their foreheads. It is not the name of Churchman, nor Reformed Episcopal Churchman, nor Baptist, nor Independent, nor Presbyterian.

My dear friends, all these names must go to the place from whence they came. They sprang from the flesh, and with the flesh they must perish. But here we have a name which all bear in union with the Lamb. In this name is seen the truth borne upon the crown of the high priest, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Every elect and redeemed sinner must be separated to the Lord, distinct with the Lord, and distinguished by the Lord. O what a mercy it is to know that wherever we go it is by Him, for Him, and with Him.

To know that all I am spiritually before my God in Christ, makes a clean sweep of all sectarian differences and denominational distinctions, and brings me, as a living child of God, into sweet fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

II. THEIR REJOICING "And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." "A voice from heaven." What is it? It can be naught but the voice of God, and those in blessed and eternal association with Him. It was "as the voice of many waters." Why the figure of water here? To show forth the might and power of those spiritual blessings which abound in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in this new covenant dispensation. These are living waters which flow forth from Jerusalem above, from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is blessedly set forth in the words of dear old John Kent:

"Beneath the sacred throne of God

I saw a river rise,

The streams were peace and pard'ning blood

Descending from the skies.

Angelic minds cannot explore

This deep unfathom'd sea;
'Tis void of bottom, brim, or shore,
And lost in Deity."

These waters communicate life wherever they flow, according to Ezekiel's glorious description of them in New Testament times. (Ezek. 47:1-12) This is the water which, if a man drink he shall live for ever, as the Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14) The text speaks of "many waters." These set forth the innumerable blessings, bounties, and benefits flowing from Christ by His Gospel to the varied members of His one body. Here we see the diversity and unity of truths. It is not the same portion of the Word of Truth that arrests all the children of God. The regeneration truth, in my case, may not be that of any member of this congregation. God has a word appointed for the quickening and ingathering of each of the lambs and sheep of His flock. For instance, one hears these words, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," (Ezek. 18:4,20) and life in the experience of conviction and condemnation is communicated. Another hears the words, "The just shall live by faith," (Habak. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38) as in the case of Martin Luther, who heard these words, and from that very moment the life was manifested in him. Another hears the glorious truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," (1 John 1:7) and life eternal is graciously experienced. You will see this fact set forth in No. 13 of Grove Chapel tracts, entitled, "It is God that Justifieth; or, An Evening with the Little flock in Ancient Rome." The tract describes the various phases of Divine justification, and the sovereignty of Jehovah displayed in the different portions employed in bringing His children to a knowledge of their standing in Christ Jesus. In 1 Cor. 12 we see the many waters of Divine grace, love, and mercy flowing through the various channels of the Spirit's appointing, the different ministers whom He qualifies and commissions to sound forth the blessings of the covenant, and the abounding grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that which worketh all in all."

"And as the voice of a great thunder." Job asks the question, "The thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14) Look at the glorious description given of Jehovah's goings forth for the salvation of His people in Habak. 3:4, "And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power." The voice of Jehovah is described by thunder. Why? As a power to wake the dead, rouse the sluggish, and bring His people into loving association with Himself. You see this in one of the most magnificent descriptions of a thunder storm to be found in the English language, and given in Ps. 29:3, "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon He maketh them also to skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." This, no doubt, has reference to the cloven tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness: the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." (Ps. 29:8) He will bring His own into many a wilderness, where they shall experience a shaking from earth and earthly things. Into desolate spots a precious Christ shall allure His bride, from whence He will give her vineyards of precious fruits and make the valley of Anchor, or confusion, a door of hope. (Hos. 2:14,15) "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve," or, "to be in pain." These are the hinds of the resurrection morning, the true Naphtalis who are let loose from the curse and dominion of sin, and satisfied with favour. (Gen. 49:21; Deut. 33:23) They

have felt the pangs of spiritual birth, and oftentimes endure the pains of godly sorrow and heartfelt repentance. Yes, "The voice of the Lord maketh His hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests; and in His temple doth every one speak of His glory," (Ps. 29:9) or, "every whit of it uttereth His glory." Every part of God's spiritual temple, however insignificant or hidden from view any portion may appear, shall speak of His glory and show forth His praise. Each stone in the building shall hear that glorious voice which called Lazarus from his grave, quickened into life the widow's son at the gate of Nain, and restored the lifeless corpse of the ruler's daughter to life and vigour.

"And I heard the voice of harpers harping on their harps." Not only peals of Almighty thunder to shake election jewels out of earth's vile dross; but soft, sweet strains of love, grace, compassion, and pity to gladden the hearts of Jehovah's contrite ones. David's delight was to play upon his harp, by which the evil spirit was allayed in Saul. Allusion is made to this playing in Ps. 92:1-3: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High. To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound." I remember one day being in company with dear old William Garrard, the watchman on the walls of Zion, when he said, "Ah, my boy, I want to have a bit of talk with you about the instrument of ten strings that David speaks of. Do you see David there? I see a greater than David. David's playing produced harsh and discordant sounds. He was a poor hand at that work. I can see David's Lord, Jehovah's best Beloved, performing upon that instrument of ten strings, God's holy, just, and righteous law, and producing therefrom sweet harmonious sounds which delighted the heart of His Father and fill my soul with rejoicing. All through His lifetime upon earth until He cried, 'It is finished,' He played upon that instrument for me. O, my dear boy, that glorious music, soft and sweet, the imputed righteousness of my Lord, soothes all my sorrows, chases away my fears and gives me peace and joy in believing." That was music indeed to my soul. You may depend upon it I listened in silence to the dear old watchman's pouring forth of these glorious truths. It is of God's rich mercy that we find our notes of Gospel music sweetly harmonizing with those of the Lamb and His redeemed company upon Mount Zion. Here we can sing, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto Thee." (Ps. 71:15,19) It is our blessed privilege to claim our standing with the Lamb and His company upon Mount Zion, reserved by His Father's grace, rejoicing in Him alone, redeemed by His blood, restrained by His love, and at last to behold His face in righteousness, satisfied with His likeness.

The time is gone. Next Sunday morning, if the Lord be pleased, we will have another look at this blessed portion of His Word.

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

"And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." (Revelation 14:4,5)

Humbly seeking the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, I endeavoured last Sunday morning to direct your attention to the precious truths set before us in the first and second verses of this chapter. My heart and my mind were then too expectant, for heavenly provision seemed to multiply, and instead of being able to get through the points I enumerated, I could speak only of the RESERVE, the associates of the Lamb upon Mount Zion, and their REJOICING in blessed and hallowed oneness with Him. It is our

privilege this morning, depending upon the same grace, to seek for instruction in the various particulars which present themselves in the three successive verses.

III. The REGENERATION set before us in the new song of the Lamb's associates upon Mount Zion. A new song only to be sung by new creatures in Christ Jesus. This leads our minds to that declaration of Paul in 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Not only are new things brought up in their heart's experience, but old things become new to them upon new covenant ground. They possess a new heart of God's own giving, according to His precious promises found interspersed throughout the Old Testament.

See Ezek. 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." This is called one heart in Jer. 32:39, "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." Why the heart and not the head? Because the heart is the seat of the affections. This teaches me that a child of God, brought by grace and indwelling of the ever-blessed Spirit into an intelligent apprehension of the mind and will of God, is not a cold Christian or an icy Calvinist.

Such I ignore altogether. In fact, I could not live spiritually and in harmony with such company. Only those in whose heart God's covenant love has been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, and who have been brought into the enjoyment of the covenant affections and sympathies of the Christ of God, will suit the cravings of that nature which He has so graciously engrafted within me. My soul blesses and praises Him for that word given to us in Psalm 68:6, "God setteth the solitary in families."

But I like the Prayer Book version which my soul clings to; it may be through the force of early association. "This is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house." One heart, one mind, one spirit, and one way in union with the great and glorious covenant Head up yonder, and communicated by the one Spirit to the members of the one family. These enjoying Jehovah's exceeding great and precious promises in the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) cannot help but sing praises unto Him.

The heart that experiences the blessedness of God's saving and redeeming love must rejoice and be glad. But mark! The singing we have set before us in our text is vastly different to that which is produced by a highly-trained choir. It is not the vociferation of the proud and pompous professor; nor is it the mere singing in harmonious strains of free-grace hymns. It is that enjoined by the apostle in Col. 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord."

And again in Eph. 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." When we are led into the sweet enjoyment of redemption, according to the purpose of the Father, by the precious blood of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, we cannot refrain from singing. Songs of rejoicing must ascend from hearts gladdened by the revelation of a precious Christ as Zion's Redeemer and Lord. Here God's redemption is experienced.

Redemption from what? Redemption from a hell experienced within through the application of God's righteous law. See Rom. 7:9, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Wherever there is a reviving of sin in the feelings of a true-born child of God, there is the experience of a hell which he hates and from which he sighs for deliverance. When a Spirit-quickened one feels

"The terrors of law and of God,"

he trembles, starts, and shrinks from the very thought of an eternity of banishment from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. See how this is described in Rev. 14:10,11: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." In the knowledge of the truth that all apart from the Son of Jehovah's love shall perish everlastingly, those of us in whose hearts He has implanted His fear are fully conscious that, left to ourselves, such a lot must have been ours. I know that in myself I am utterly vile and unworthy, not deserving the slightest mercy at the hand of a gracious God. I am not only undeserving in all I may think, say, or do, but hell-deserving for all that I do. Without the power and preciousness of God the ever-blessed Spirit, my prayers are pollution, my praises but exhibitions of my conceit, and my preaching but empty show. For all I do, hell is my due desert; for one moment I am full of pride and conceit, and the next, doubts and accursed unbelief prevail over me. Were it not for the fact He has so graciously taught me, that all true preaching is not from the man in the pulpit, but by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven conveying and communicating God's own words to the waiting hearts of His people, you may rest assured that rarely, if ever, would you see me standing in this place endeavouring to speak a few words for the glory of my God, the exaltation of His Christ, the honour of His Spirit, and the comfort and encouragement of His tried and tempted people. The God-sent minister is made a blessing to God's own as he is led to ignore himself, loathe himself, and, as some will say, think too little of himself; but this can never be. When I am in my right mind, I think nothing of myself and everything of His Christ by whom I have introduction into the enjoyment of my standing before the face of the Father, and the rich experience of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. With the experimental possession of His great and glorious redemption, and the spiritual blessings of His everlasting covenant of grace, the heart must sing the song of redeeming love before Him. The Scriptures abound with songs of deliverance, from that of Moses in Exodus 15 to those recorded in this book of Revelation. Every one of them, almost without exception, was poured forth to God because of enemies defeated, adversaries overcome, and foes overthrown.

What is regeneration? Not that which is hawked about by the religious world as conversion. I often stand in doubt of the preacher, however sound he may be, who uses the word conversion to describe the work of regeneration, for I believe not one portion of the blessed Book where the word conversion occurs refers to God's grand act of regeneration. Regeneration is a sovereign and omnipotent act never to be repeated. Conversion may be repeated again and again. It indicates the working up of old material and presenting it with a new face and new features.

But regeneration is the revelation of something entirely new. Paul styles it, in 2 Cor. 5:17, "A new creation." It is the manifestation of a new nature altogether apart from the fleshly, corrupt, old Adam nature. With its appearance old things pass away, and all things become new. The living child of God knows something of what the Lord meant when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again" "from above" "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3) that is, he cannot understand, apprehend, or appreciate the beauties, bounties, or blessings of the inward and spiritual kingdom of God.

Again, "Except a man be born of water" (John 3:5) the Word of the living God, which reveals Christ in union with His people and His people in union with Him "and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" that is, he cannot enter feelingly and intelligently into the realities of the kingdom of God. A few

Sunday mornings ago I endeavoured to explain to you the distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven represents God's gracious work in the midst of corruption, deceit, and hypocrisy.

The kingdom of God represents His work without the surrounding error, superstition, sin, or the flesh. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," said the Baptist at the commencement of his ministry; but the Lord Jesus Christ said to His own, "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) There is a vast amount of difference between the kingdom at hand and the kingdom in the heart; the kingdom near and the kingdom experimentally possessed. An experimental and intelligent entrance into the kingdom of God cannot be enjoyed by any but those who are born again, born of the Word and Spirit of God.

That Nicodemus might fully understand that flesh and Spirit are eternally distinct, the Saviour said unto him, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." (John 3:6,7) There are two distinct natures in every regenerate person. The children of God, born again, and possessing a spiritual and Divine nature, present to the Author of their spiritual being spiritual and heavenly evidences of their oneness with Him.

In the solemn and sovereign act of regeneration, there is no trimming, adorning, or improving of the flesh. They possess a perfectly new nature in vital union with a risen and glorified Christ; and as they are led by the Spirit into the rich experiences of God's regenerating grace, they rejoice with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and glory in the fact that old covenant commands have become new covenant comforts, and Old Testament precepts are transformed into New Testament promises. Here they enter into a spiritual understanding of their glorious privileges as God's redeemed ones in living oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. THEIR REDEMPTION "And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." The heart-searching question comes to my mind, How many of us now assembled together can sing the song of redeeming love? Who among us experience the bubblings up of adoring gratitude for redemption by love, blood, and power from Satan, sin, and self? How many as new creatures in Christ Jesus make melody in your hearts to the Lord? Who can answer these questions? Only those in whose hearts the Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God. Some of you may not be able to trace the witnessings of the Spirit clearly and to your satisfaction, yet you can sing those blessed words of Dr. Watts:

"Assure my conscience of her part

In the Redeemer's blood;

And bear Thy witness with my heart

That I am born of God."

Redemption! What is it? It is buying, purchasing; ay, and something more. It simply means a buying back, a restoration by price and power of property to the original and rightful owner. We see this in the law of redemption as set forth in Leviticus 25. Here the institution of the year of jubilee is recorded. According to the historic records of inspiration, the jubilee was never once observed by Israel as a nation after the flesh. Why, then, is the institution recorded? That the living children of God may come into a spiritual

understanding of the blessings, privileges, and immunities of God's eternal year of jubilee. The deep which coucheth beneath the letter of the Word in Leviticus 25, contains precious treasures into which none but those who are born of God and who follow Him as dear children can ever enter experimentally and feelingly. Oh, how blessed it is to sing in the spirit,

"In Christ the sons of Adam boast

More blessings than their father lost!"

The blessings of redemption were not possessed or known by Adam until after his fall, when he was brought as a redeemed sinner to the enjoyment of his acceptance in the Beloved, and of Christ being formed in him the Hope of glory.

Redemption by price. This price was too high for any created mortal to reach, too high for a seraph's flight to touch, too great for all the myriads of Adam's sons and daughters put together ever to pay. But here God's marvellous mercy is revealed, when we are taught by the Holy Ghost that all our sinful and self-righteous efforts only increase our load of guilt, and sin, and shame, when we are convinced of our utter inability to present anything of our own to God thereby to claim His favour, and to be brought to the enjoyment of His love, when we are constrained to sing or sigh with the heart before Him,

"Not the labours of my hands

Can fulfil Thy law's demands:

Could my zeal no respite know,

Could my tears for ever flow,

All for sin could not atone;

Thou must save, and Thou alone!"

then He is pleased to reveal to our waiting hearts our glorious Redeemer and His redemption price. What is the price? Blood, precious blood! See how blessedly this is stated by Peter in his 1st chapter, verses 18 and 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ."

"Great was the price to justice due,

When Jesus would redeem His bride;

Nothing but precious blood would do,

And that must flow from His own side."

Precious blood because it is that of the great and glorious God-Man. It is called in Acts 20:28, God's own blood. Why? Because it is the blood of His own providing, the blood of His own covenant, the blood of His own Son. This blood has all the excellency and worth of Deity in it. Its effects are great, rich, and glorious. It is the expression of eternal love and exhibits infinite power. It was shed for many, even for all the elect, and for none else. One of our hymn writers has sweetly expressed its limits and effects,

"Eternal, free, electing grace

Redemption's bound'ry sets;

And those whom Jesus died to save,

The Spirit ne'er forgets."

There is the Father loving and electing, the Son loving and redeeming, the Spirit loving and regenerating. Election, redemption, and regeneration run together in unbroken harmony. Nothing discordant here. Blessed with the knowledge and understanding of these glorious truths, we can say with John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" by the grace and indwelling of His blessed Spirit. (1 John 1:3) Here we know we are redeemed from earth to find our home in heaven, and redeemed from among men to own no man Master save a precious Christ.

V. THEIR RESTRAINT "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." A remarkable statement of the chastity of God's redeemed. Rome has made marvellous capital out of it in propagating that mark of the beast, the celibacy of the priesthood. She, with the mock modesty and false delicacy of an adulteress, tells us that marriage becomes not those who are set apart to serve at her altars and dispense her sacred rites. If this be true, it is strange that an all-holy God in the Old Testament dispensation should separate married men to Himself to serve in His sanctuary, and be His representatives before Israel.

Ay, and strange too, that the holy Jesus should pitch upon married men to be His companions and disciples. Let the dupes and apes of the scarlet adulteress look to that solemn and salutary injunction of the Holy Ghost by the apostle Paul in Heb. 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Why then does the Holy Ghost make use of these words by John? "These are they which were not defiled with women: for they are virgins."

The first part refers to the masculine, and the latter to the feminine. This is a wonderful mystery of grace which Christ blessedly opens up to His enlightened and Spirit-taught brethren, those who are brought as Nazarites indeed to experience their separation from the world, as Moses did: "For wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." (Exod. 33:16) Look at those words, "Is it not that Thou goest with us?"

Jehovah with His people and His people with Him. When two hearts beat together in harmony, and their love is blessedly mutual, and their possessors in the presence of God and man become one flesh, the question is asked, "Will thou keep thee only unto him or her, so long as ye both shall live?" The persons become sacred to each other. This joining together is of Jehovah, who has stamped and sealed it with His holy approbation. There is no description of this union so sweet as that flowing from the pen of Peter, "Heirs together of the grace of life." (1 Pet. 3:7) Jehovah, in the riches of His grace and the fullness of His love, says to His people, "I am married unto you." (Jer. 3:14) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had formed the earth and the world, in covenant transactions and ties of eternal love He was the Husband of His Church.

He is her's, and He will keep to her as long as He shall live, and none of the communications of His covenant affection shall go beyond the bounds fixed in His eternal counsels. He teaches His own to be like

Himself and keep herself to Him. Blessed be God, this is true, as His people live feelingly and experimentally by the grace of God the ever-blessed Spirit, through Him, to Him, with Him, and in Him. Upon His head the world place every crown, the crown of creation, the crown of redemption, the crown of providence, the crown of grace, and the crown of glory.

They acknowledge Him as the Author of their salvation, own Him as their Husband and Provider, and ascribe to Him all might, majesty, dominion, and power. Do they contemplate their salvation? They know it is His. Do they remember all the way they have been led? They see Him as their leader. Do they rejoice in the experimental realization of His lovingkindness and tender mercy? They know it is by the sweet kisses of His mouth. Do they glory in the possession of the blessings of His everlasting covenant of grace? They are persuaded it is all by His exceeding great and precious promises, which are all Yea and Amen to them. He is the gracious Revealer to them of this glorious truth:

"In Him the Father never saw

The least transgression of His law;

Perfection then in Him we view,

His saints in Him are perfect too."

"These are they which were not defiled with women." What kind of women? There are all sorts of women in the world, chaste and lewd, pure and adulterous. The lewd and adulterous are alluded to here as fallen and unclean professors. Now mark! The living child of God is truly sensitive concerning the purity of his faith, the reality of his hope, and the chasteness of his love. I stand here this morning in the presence of my God and His people, and can say that next to life itself I prize the purity of this pulpit.

Why? Because God has wrought in me that desire felt so strongly by the apostle Paul, and expressed in 2 Cor. 11:2-4: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another Gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with me."

So it reads in the margin. Paul knew that he would be considered harsh, particular, and too nice. Ah, my dear friends, you may depend upon it, I should not feel comfortable if I thought the atmosphere of this place was polluted with the stench of the creature in the enunciation of duty-faith, duty-prayer, and duty-praise. It would be my misery to think that your ears had been offended with those sounds which charm the ears of these who hug their chains of spiritual slavery, and persevere in their doing down to the burning beds of eternal damnation.

But for me to have the quiet assurance that the testimony from myself, and from those in my absence, is all of a piece, is a source of comfort and encouragement to my soul before God. The apostle declared, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy," or, with the jealousy of God; "for I have espoused you to one Husband." So have I. My desire for you is, that you may not be wedded to me. Cease from man. I have not espoused you to myself, nor even to the Church in this place. If I did so, I should be departing from "the simplicity that is in Christ."

If I see a person in possession of a broken heart manifesting a desire to become one with us in Church membership, my heart goes forth to receive such an one, and I pray the Lord to unite him opening with ourselves. But I know that God has many unbelieving, yet believing, children. These cannot speak an approving word of the work of grace in them, nor make any boast of God doing anything for them, yet, the longing desires of their hearts are Godward, homeward, heavenward, giving blessed evidence of their oneness with, and acceptance in, the Beloved.

I have known, and do know, those who are eager for place, position, and power, who can prate out their experience at the corner of every street, but my soul stands in doubt of them. The company I delight in is formed of those of whom the Holy Ghost declares,

"They are virgins." The glory of God's Gospel is this, that in His glorious purpose His Church and people stand in unbroken, unceasing, uninterrupted oneness with Christ in His purity, spotlessness, and perfection. Knowing this, we delight to sing with dear old John Kent,

"Bethroth'd in love, ere time begun,

His blood-bought bride with Jesus see;

Made by eternal union ONE,

Who was, and is, and is to be.

Thus in His eyes she ever stood

From wrinkle and from blemish free

Loved with the dateless love of God,

And blest by the great sacred Three."

Notice the words,

"Thus in His eyes she ever stood

From wrinkle and from blemish free."

Yes, when she fell in Adam, she stood in Christ as pure as He is pure. When she wandered from her Husband in the Adam-fall,

"She on His sacred bosom lay,

Loved with an everlasting love."

When down in the depths of spiritual corruption, "in the glass of His decrees," the eye of the Father saw her standing in the very heights of glory, to which she must be lifted by the power of His rich and magnanimous grace, and into the knowledge and understanding of this she must be brought by the teaching of His Spirit, the declaration of His Word, the preaching of His Gospel, and the communication of His love. This is the blessed lot of the living Church of God in union with the Lamb upon Mount Zion. "They are virgins." In the purpose of the Father sin cannot touch them, in the person of the Son Satan cannot hurt them, in the power of the Holy Ghost the flesh cannot corrupt them. Neither sin, Satan, nor self can

hurt or destroy in all this holy mountain.

VI. THEIR RECTITUDE "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." This portion puzzled me and filled me with anxiety for many a long year. I used to look at it with a fleshly free-will eye, and ponder over it with a legal spirit. I thought, if the virgins of Christ's company follow Him whithersoever He goeth, then surely I cannot be one of them, for I wander from Him and obey not the precepts, commands, and injunctions of His Word. Ay, since He has quickened me into spiritual life and brought me as a purged worshipper into His temple, I have found out that if following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth refers to what some style Church order and Church ordinances, then I have not followed Him at all. But as the scales fell from the eyes of my spiritual understanding, and I was led to see this as a spiritual following, my heart rejoiced in the enjoyment of that liberty with which Christ makes His people free. I see that my following the Lamb has respect to Him as my Forerunner appointed in the covenant of old to go before me into every spot of temptation and tribulation, suffering and sorrow, and there reveal Himself as my Salvation, and cause me to experience the tender sympathy of His heart. Now I do not wish to speak one word to wound the tender sensibility of any poor child of God, but I have often heard this quoted in reference to the ordinance of baptism. To my mind this is sheer folly. Have all those on Mount Zion been outwardly baptized, either by immersion in a baptistery or by sprinkling at a font? No such thing. Look at the dying thief. The only baptism he could boast of was that described by Cowper,

"The dying thief rejoiced to see

That Fountain in his day;

And here am I, Lord, vile as he,

Wash all my sins away."

Upon a loving Saviour's bosom he winged his flight to glory, where now he stands with the blood-washed and glorified followers of the Lamb "on Zion's heavenly hill." Many who "drink full draughts of bliss unknown" in the realms of bliss, have never followed the Lamb's injunction, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Bread and wine as emblems of His broken body and shed blood they never partook of, yet they sit with Him and feast their souls upon His beauty and His love. While here below they drank of the cup of trembling and of the cup of salvation from His gracious hands.

They oftentimes trembled with the experience of His judgment upon their wretched flesh, and rejoiced in the sweet enjoyment of His mercy upon their redeemed spirits. Following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, is true of every lamb and sheep in His elect and redeemed flock. Now look at Jehovah's promise to His own Israel: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared." Exod. 23:20) Before His people He goes and sometimes makes them a terror to all their enemies round about them who would otherwise persecute and annoy them.

You see this more than once in the history of Jacob. See Gen. 31:21, "And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Again, in Gen. 35:5, "And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." God went before Jacob to defend him, though Jacob was not conscious of the fact. Laban evidently meant mischief, but was compelled to acknowledge to Jacob that God appeared to him in the night and gave him to understand that if he put a finger upon Jacob, He would settle matters with him.

During a life of sorrow a precious Christ went before His people, and it is their mercy to know that "In all their afflictions He was afflicted," (Isa. 63:9) and now they are with Him in all His temptations. (Luke 22:28) It is ours this morning to rejoice in that blessed truth: "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. 2:18) O, ye tempted and tried ones, who may be passing through deep floods of sorrows and fierce fires of temptation, think of this glorious truth, that He who is your Husband and your Head, He with whom you are experimentally one, has gone before you every step of your journey, and will cause you to follow after Him according to His covenant declaration, "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 pluck them out of My hand." (John 10:27,28) Blessed privilege in the children of God.

As His redeemed sheep, they are "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." Why styled "the firstfruits?" As the firstfruits of the harvest are small in comparison to the harvest itself, so the redeemed appear but a handful among men, a few lilies among many thorns

"A little flock amidst a host

Of lions, dogs, and swine;

Distinguish'd by the Holy Ghost.

And Jesus says, They're Mine."

As the firstfruits were dedicated to God, so His people are precious to Him in choice, redemption, and acceptance.

VII. THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS "And in their mouth was no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." This is true concerning the whole election of grace. The redeemed and regenerate children of God stand before Him, in the person of their great and glorious Surety, righteous as He is righteous. He took their sins and made an end of them. (Dan. 9:24) He gave them His righteousness, which shall never be abolished. He who knew no sin was made sin for them, that they might be made the Righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21) His name is, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," and as such they are known in the court of heaven. (Jer. 23:6; 33:16) The design, aim, and end of the Gospel ministry is to present every man, brought under its power, perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. 1:28) These "are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power." (Col. 2:10) The Father has accepted or graced them in the Beloved; (Eph. 1:6) and the Beloved has determined to "present them to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27) These, during their time-state here upon earth, delight to hear His voice when their sighs, groans, and longings ascend to Him, for in their intercourse with Him there is no guile in their mouth. They do not profess to be what they are not, and fear to presume to be what God has not taught them by the power of the Holy Ghost. Are they filthy in their feelings and experience? They confess it. Are they hell-deserving? They acknowledge it. While they declare their blackness before Him, He pronounces them to be comely. While they write bitter things against themselves, He blesses them with a good hope through grace. While they declare themselves to be all sin, deserving naught but banishment from His presence and from the glory of His power, He will cheer them with His sweet whisper of love: "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." (Songs 4:7)

May the Lord add His blessing for His name's sake. Amen.

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