

A sermon preached by the late Mr. J.E. Hazelton on 2nd October 1910 from the text Isaiah 62. 10 to 12. "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world. Say ye to the daughter of Zion. Behold thy salvation cometh; behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. "And they shall call them, the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken."

Historically these words refer to the Jewish people and to their future, and according to the light which God has given me upon His Word, I heartily endorse what that great man, Mr. Philpot, says where in one of his books he affirms that the Restoration of the Jews to their own land seems as clearly revealed as their dispersion. I cannot see how anyone can read the earlier verses of the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy and escape from this conclusion. I know not how it is, but what is called "The Jewish question" has fallen much into the background among the causes of Truth, whereas those who we esteem to be among our Doctors and Leaders have entertained this view of many of the prophecies. Dr. Gill was absolutely clear upon it, as also was Toplady, and also Mr. Philpot and not a few others, and therefore if we, in connection with the history set forth in this chapter, look upon it primarily as referring to the Jewish people and to the glorious future awaiting them, it will give to us light as we further consider the passage spiritually.

Who speaks these words? It is King Messiah. What are believing people directed to do? and when the Lord directs He gives the power. They are directed to "make mention of the Lord, and to keep not silence", or as the margin has it, "Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers keep not silence."

Then again the Lord's oath is pledged for the complete performance of all that this chapter so beautifully sets forth. Dear friends we miss so much when we turn away from a consideration of the hopes and prospects of the one Church. As we are brought into sympathy with the purposes of our divine Lord in relation to the coming of His King, and in relation to that great and glorious reign which will overcome evil upon the earth, Divine comfort often visits our hearts, and blessing comes to our souls. There is not one here who knows and loves the Lord, who does not long for the time when our blessed Redeemer shall manifestedly wear those many crowns. There is not one of us here who knows and loves the Lord, who does not earnestly long for that day when the kingdom of God will come, and His will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

But let us pass on and speak of the spiritual significance of these great and glorious words, pointing historically to the conversion of the remnant of the Jewish people. But Zion is addressed here, and Zion here stands for the Church, that Church which He hath purchased with His own blood, and which the Apostle Paul spake of on the seashore of Miletus. That is one of the most lovely scenes in the Acts of the Apostles, where the people said farewell to the Apostle Paul, and he commended them to the God of all grace. He

spoke of their inheritance among those that are sanctified, and he spoke to the elders of the flock of God, which He had purchased with His own blood, and of which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. And as we read this cluster of blessings in these verses, our hearts can sing -

Saviour, if of Zion's city,
I, through grace, a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy name.

O dear friends, this is the indisputable need, without which a knowledge of the letter of prophecy is speculative, barren and worthless, - Am I right for God? Am I a member of Zion's city? I was reading yesterday in the review of the new edition of one of the most brilliant of modern authors who has passed away, and I was astonished - and should never have believed it if I had not read it - to come across this passage, written in 1854 when near the point of death - "I have been gliding upon the dancing flowers of philosophy all my life...and now I take my stand on the Bible, and kneel with my black brother, and seek for that mercy which I feel that I stand in need of." What the real spiritual condition of that man was we must leave, but there is the testimony of a dying man concerning the unsatisfying character of all things earthly, and that at the last he must take his stand upon the Bible and kneel in prayer before his God.

Now the whole text here refers to the work of the Spirit of God in bringing the poor sinner out of death into life, out of a natural condition into that which is blessed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Some of you may have thought the text long because I am especially given to selecting very brief portions of God's Holy Word. But if you want a paraphrase of these words you have it in the 11th verse of the 3rd chapter of Colossians, where we are told that "Christ is all and in all." Why, dear friends, Christ is the fulness and the substance of the whole of this text. "Go through, go through the gates" - Christ is the strength, guided by which the children of God advance to sweet fellowship and communion with the Father. Here the Lord says, "Prepare ye the way." Christ is the Way. "Cast up the highway - Christ is the Highway. "Lift up a standard (or an ensign) for the people" - Christ is the Standard for His people. Then the Lord speaks about His salvation. It is Christ, the glorious Lord, who proclaims to the most needy and far-off sinner, to him who is, so to speak, at the end of the earth, that He is Salvation and His reward is with Him. We have therefore not many subjects in this text, but ONE, and that is the Christ of God, the Head of the Church, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending of all that is written; the beginning and the ending of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It is Christ in His Person, in His fulness, in His grace, in His work, in His righteousness, and with His precious blood that shines transcendentally upon us in the words before us.

Let us speak upon two things which shine very brightly here. First of all there are Divine directions, and secondly, there are Divine declarations.

There are DIVINE DIRECTIONS, and the first is that N.B., as it were, which God the Holy Spirit puts in His Word, when He directs the attention of the poor and needy sinner, and the tried people of God to the Christ of God. You will find in the 11th verse the word "Behold" occurs three times. "Behold the Lord hath proclaimed." "Behold thy salvation cometh." "Behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." Three notes of admiration put here by God the Holy Spirit, whose divine office it is to take of Christ and the things of Christ, and to show them unto us. "Behold HIM, Behold Him Behold HIM! and if our minds be taken up with our salvation, they must needs be entirely occupied with the Christ of God. Oh! that to day the Spirit who cries "BEHOLD", would so clothe the word with power, that each of us here may be taught afresh to know Christ as our ALL, to have no other object for our faith to rest upon but the Christ of God. To realise that in our Christ is contained all that we need for every step of this our time journey. To realise this by the Spirit's ministry is to know the source of peace; it is to know what the poetess meant when she sang, -

My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing,
My heart is at the secret Source
Of every blessed thing.

Christ is the remedy for all the soul's disorders. From Christ cometh all peace, and at His feet as I am privileged to sit, the things that vex and disturb and perplex my mind and my heart are all brought to be laid aside. The solution of all the soul's difficulties is Christ. The solution, or the quieting of the mind, in relation to the dark and inscrutable things in Providence and elsewhere, is Christ, and as I know Christ, as I rest upon Christ, as I receive from Christ - He who is the great and glorious subject of this passage - I know what it is to have rest. "Come unto ME all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest", and so three times the silvery bell of Christ rings, Behold! behold! Behold! Behold Him whom the Father loves! Behold Him whose reward is with Him, and whose work is before Him! Behold His salvation! Behold His tenderness! Behold His humanness, for He is God manifest in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us. Surely, dear friends, we need this blessed direction repeated again and again, because my carnal mind is attracted by ten thousand vanities. My old nature, that will be with me unto the end, finds no satisfaction in spiritual things, and so we need to have the word and the POWER of the "Behold" coming home to our hearts. And yet we are attracted by spiritual things, yet we do know that spiritual things and the Christ of God can alone satisfy and raise our souls. It is conclusively demonstrated then that there are two natures within us, the old and the new; death and life; darkness and light; and blessed are they who thrill as the word "Behold" with spiritual power comes home to them, whose hearts are panting, and who are pining for Jesus and His love. Having in view the fact that we have this nature that cleaves to the world, all the dealings of our God with us are right. It is right that we should be taught daily that this is not our rest. It is right that we should be emptied from vessel to vessel. It is

right that we should have exactly the very cross, the very trouble, the very exercise which the Lord has laid upon us. All these things are right. You and I are limited in our view; our horizon is narrow, but our God is working upon an eternal plan; He has eternity before Him, and He has our eternal welfare in view. With hearts so prone to wander, with affections that by nature are fixed upon the material and the world, oh, we need a lot of teaching, a lot of educating, and so He empties us and causes us to know and feel that this is not our rest. Why? that we may behold a living Christ, an incarnate Saviour, the Lover of our souls, whose love has no ebbs and flows, who is never cold to the people of His choice, but "who having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Christ is ALL, but then, do not let us lose sight of the blessed continuation of that - Christ is ALL and IN ALL. Oh! that God would give us faith to grasp that. "IN ALL"! what does that mean? In all your temptations, in all your trials, in all your sorrows. God uses them to bring us to live in simple dependence upon Himself.

Again, look at Him whom we are bidden thus to behold. The Holy Ghost says here "His reward is with Him and His work before Him." How are we to understand that? By a reference to the margin. "His reward is with Him; His recompense is before Him" (instead of "His work"). Now what is the reward which a precious Christ brings? It is HIMSELF; it is that which belongs to His Church, a requital not according to our deserts, but according to His merits. What is His recompense? That belongs to Himself. The "reward" belongs to poor, needy, hoping, looking sinners, and the "recompense" belongs to the great Rewarder. Behold Him whose reward is with Him, and whose recompense is before Him!

"Behold Him whose reward is with Him", - the proclamation of mercy to poor sinners. And as the mercy of our God in Christ is dropped into the soul of a needy sinner, it is the very beginning of Heaven; Does Christ come to you and to me with a reward? Oh! indeed He does. He rewards deeply, "His reward is with Him", the reward of love and of mercy which comes to us through His glorious work, and the longings that are created in your heart are "the preparations of the heart", for the anointings which the Lord brings. He brings His reward with Him, His anointings, His mercy, His fulness and love, just that favour that exactly meets our needs, and "the preparations of the heart" as well as the "answer of the tongue" are both alike from the Lord. What has a precious Christ in His hands? Nothing but mercy. What has He in His heart? Nothing but love. What has He in the exercise of blessed power concerning us? Nothing but mercy, guiding us to the right path when we wander, and bearing with all our manners in the wilderness.

What is "His recompense"? His Church. His reward to poor sinners is Himself, and His recompense is "the Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." His recompense was ever before Him. He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth as we see from the 8th chapter of Proverbs. When He was on earth discharging His covenant obligations He said, "I have a baptism to

be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" It was the recompense that was before Him, and the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God". For that recompense, for you and for me! Is it not wonderful, that poor wretches like you and I should constitute part of the recompense of our blessed Lord, God's co-equal and co-eternal Son, wearing our nature? that we, who deserved Hell, through the grace of God should be constituted part of that recompense! For the sake of that recompense He was straitened until His baptism of blood and of suffering was accomplished. He comes and His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.

Another direction, and this is a two-fold one. "Go through, go through." Twice we have this "Go through, go through the gates." That means go through the gates perfectly, completely; hence in the 26th of Isaiah we have that blessed promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee". But we are told by Hebrew scholars that in the Hebrew it is just the two-fold repetition of the word "peace" - "Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace", and the two together constitute the perfect peace, and so this going through the gates does not mean half through, but completely through.

"Go through, go through the gates". It is the word of the Holy Spirit having reference to our blessed Lord. It means, "Go through the gate of death into the gate of life." "Go through, go through!" It is a command that is free from all conditions. Look at Lazarus as an example! "Lazarus come forth". It was the word of Him who said "Light be and light was", and immediately Lazarus went through the gates and came out a risen and restored man. If we have been brought out of one gate - the gate of spiritual death - of necessity we have entered into the other. "Go through, go through the gates." Oh! dear doubting one, trembling, fearing, hesitating one, in the Gospel of God there is no halfway, and if there is no middle place, if He was brought you through the death of trespasses and sins, He has said to you "Go through the gate" of a precious Christ, the gate of everlasting love, the "strait gate" that leadeth into life eternal. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand". You cannot mark the time, very few can, comparatively. Very few among the Lord's people, comparatively speaking, can mark the time when the word came, and they went through the gate of death, and passed through the gate of everlasting life. There are some who have to speak of long years before liberty came. In some the work was brief; in others exceedingly gradual; but all according to the ordering of our covenant God. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see", says someone. "Go through the gates" has been spoken to you; you are in the land of everlasting life; you are joined to Jesus; you have been made manifest as one with Him through the eternal choice. "Go through, go through the gates", and though I cannot tell how I went through, or the circumstances, I know that Christ is not to me what He once was, for He was once "a root out of a dry ground", but now His Gospel often stirs my spirit. If you have gone through the

gates you are alive. Those hungry desires that you have indicate life; the crumbs which you have of encouragement and blessing in the things of God, indicate life. The "willing mind" is a sign of life, and to pass through the gates is to pass through them completely in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Look at the woman of Samaria. She was a sullen, miserable sinner when she went to that well of Sychar where the blessed Lord was, and as the Lord talked to her, power went forth, she went through the gates, and the proof that she had gone through the gates to her was the willing mind; she longed for the water of eternal life of which her blessed Lord had spoken. And so, dear friends, having brought you through the gates, all the way before you is now prepared "Prepare the way". Brought through the gates, and right along the way is prepared and ordered. If you are to have ten sorrows you will not have eleven.

Another direction, and again it is a two-fold one. It is very remarkable here, is it not, the repetition of these directions? "Cast up, cast up the highway". Three "beholds", two "go throughs", and two "cast ups". Now who is to "cast up the highway?" God the Holy Spirit. Who is the highway? Christ Jesus the Lord. And how does the Holy Spirit "cast up the Highway" to a poor sinner? The Highway Himself - our blessed Lord - shall tell us. "Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" There is the casting up of the Highway - "He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it unto you"; and here is the Spirit of the living God performing His part of the covenant work. "Cast up, cast up the Highway" so that poor, needy sinners may see their precious Saviour, and be enabled to walk in Him, and have their hearts' affections drawn out towards Him.

But our time is going. I wish I could be a little more orderly in what I have to say. I feel very dissatisfied when I get home and remember so much that should have been said.

"Gather out the stones". Is that a word to the Holy Spirit? Yes. And the Holy Spirit in gathering out the stones is pleased to make men and women instrumental. But how primarily does the Holy Spirit gather out the stones? What stones are there? There are undoubtedly two - two tables of stone containing the ten Commandments the ten words of God. How can I walk in that highway, in that way with those ten words each one cutting me down, each one revealing to me my own unrighteousness, each one condemning me in thought and word and deed. God says "Gather out the stones", and as the poor sinner comes near, the Spirit of the living God shows that the stones have been gathered out and put in the Ark of the Covenant, for that is where the Tables of the Law were, and on the Ark of the Covenant the Mercy Seat has been erected, and

In the wounds of Jesus laid,
'Tis sweet to read the Law.

"He shall receive of Mine and shall shew it unto you" - showing that sin has been blotted out by the blood of Christ, and that He is our All and in All. What encouragement there is to every poor, needy sinner in this blessed fact which just comes to my mind! In the 1st chapter of Matthew we have our Lord's genealogy according to the flesh set forth, but in the 5th verse we read - "And Salmon beget Booz of Rachab; and Booz beget Obed of Ruth; and Obed beget Jesse." Who was Rahab? A poor outcast from Jericho's city. And Salmon, a prince of Israel, fell in love with Rahab, that poor outcast. Salmon the prince won Rahab's heart, married her and she became the mother of Boaz, and one of the ancestry according to the flesh of our blessed Lord. And what were you and I? Tarrying in the city of Jericho, far from God even as was Rahab, but He has won our affections. O! dear friends, the Lord says "Cast up, cast up the highway", speak to them of My great love, and as they see Me sitting upon the Mercy Seat show them that I sit on a Law which I have fulfilled to its uttermost extent for all My dear people.

He cannot love us more,
He will not love us less,
In His sight fair,
Cleansed by His word,
A bride adorned for her Lord.

"Gather out the stones". Someone says, "I wish I knew that I was one of the elect." That is a stone in your way. What did Bunyan say? He tells us in "Grace Abounding" how that stone was gathered out in his experience. "I said to myself, I will search in the Book of God and see whether ever there was a sinner that trusted in Jesus who was confounded" That was God's leading, gathering out the stones, and Bunyan says "I searched from the first chapter of Genesis to the last in Revelation, and I could not find one poor sinner who trusted in Jesus and was confounded, and I said, "I will even come, for He will not reject me". "Gather out the stones!" That trust, that need, and that hope and desire are proofs of God's electing love.

"But I have not had the experience of somebody else." And what do you want it for? Are you dissatisfied with God's sovereignty in that respect? If you are not hunted like some, you are just as much in need of Christ, just as much in need of the care of the good Shepherd.

"But then I have such bad thoughts, profane, atheistical thoughts. And as a rule these thoughts come in proportion as the things of eternity are laid with weight upon our minds. But these thoughts come in against our own will, without our consent. They scare us, they are the fiery missiles of the great Adversary, the works of Satan, and it is a mercy when unbelief is, as one of our great poets has it, when unbelief is to us a prison, - not a fortress. If you are in the gall of bitterness, you entrench yourself in unbelief, but what a mercy it is to feel that we are shut up in it as in a prison, and long to emerge from it.

"But I am good for nothing". Well, it was for the "good-for-

"nothings" that Jesus came to die, because we have this word in the Epistle to the Corinthians (the 1st Epistle and the 1st chapter) "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise... and things which are not to bring to nought things that are." Search the Scriptures, and there you shall see the sweet attractions of Him crucified, and the Divine love of thy God.

Lastly, there is the Declaration. And what is the Declaration? "They shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the LORD... Sought-out, a city not forsaken." Oh, blessed, blessed Gospel! The holy people in Christ Jesus the Lord, the redeemed of the LORD, un-reproachable in His sight - literally unarraignable in His sight! That is our justification; God has set our Surety free and therefore we are clear. My sins are gone, but what I want is that the justification, the sentence of justification shall be pronounced again and again in my soul. A two-fold justification - justification as a state, and justification as an experience. That experience dear old John Berridge expresses very beautifully when he sings,

But ask the Lord for His receipt,
To show the payment good,
Delivered from the Mercy Seat,
And sprinkled with His Blood.

What a hole and corner He found us in! A sought-out sinner; a rebel who was sought in the "cloudy and dark day." "And they shall be called a City not forsaken." Oh, the unforsaking love of our dear Lord! He will not forsake His Church, His City, His Bride, for she is so weak, so empty, so prone to wander. O dear friends, what a Gospel we have here! What a Saviour! What a home in prospect! I wish I could preach the Gospel as it is worthy to be preached, for it is such Good News, but I can say concerning you, as did Rutherford as expressed in that beautiful poem by Mrs. Cousins of his last words,

Oh, if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens,
In Emmanuel's Land.