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DEVONSHIRE ROAD PULPIT,
GREENWICH, S.E.

THE SLEEP OF GOD'S BELOVED.

A SERMON

DELIVERED BY THE PASTOR,

JOSEPH JARVIS.

On Lord's Day Evening, February 3rd, 1907.

[Substantially revised.]

"For so He giveth His beloved sleep."—Ps. cxxvii. 2.

KING DAVID was wise and observant; therefore amongst other things had beheld the almost incessant toil of "the man with the muck-rake," and the depressing results of his fruitless labour. Hence he remarks, in the opening words of this instructive psalm, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep." Gracious and learned men tell us that our text may be rendered, "So He giveth His beloved *in* sleep." However this may be, it is certainly most difficult to understand the meaning of the Holy Spirit in this passage if we follow only the Authorized Version, for it stands directly connected with that part of the context which censures that very laboriousness and carefulness which our translation of the second verse seems to justify. But you will observe that the word "for" is in italics, and may therefore be left out of the translation—in this case with considerable advantage; for then, as a certain Hebrew scholar remarks, the sense will be, "All the same He giveth His beloved sleep." That is, the Lord blesses His own beloved children with sweet refreshing sleep, without improper care and labour, notwithstanding all those sources of care which prevent it in those who have not the knowledge of His grace. His loved ones receive it from Him as a free and loving gift, and do not therefore purchase a little repose at so dear a rate as those who are "careful and troubled about many things," forgetting that "one thing" only "is needful."

I. But now we must take a more extended view of this precious subject. Observe the title—it reads, "A song of degrees for Solomon." You will remember that when Solomon was born, the Lord sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet to David, and commanded the name of the child to be called Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him. This name, as I suppose you know, signifies, "The Lord's beloved," or, "The Lord's darling." Now, it is remarkable that David, by the Spirit, in this psalm for Solomon makes a delightful allusion to this God-given name, saying, "So He giveth His beloved"—His Jedidiah—"sleep." But, my dear brethren, I perceive that "a greater than Solomon is here." Jehovah Jesus is here! God's co-equal, co-eternal, and dearly-beloved Son, yea, Jehovah's Darling! The learned inform us that the word translated "beloved," is in the Hebrew text written in the singular number. This, I think, is remarkable and instructive. Infallible wisdom inspired every word of this holy Book, and you will perceive also that our translators were endued with more than ordinary

grace and understanding, when I point out to you that our Authorized Version without doubt gives perfectly the meaning of the original in its application to the glorious Son of God. Listen again to the opening words of this psalm: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Solomon was appointed of God to build that magnificent house, the temple at Jerusalem, which was to be "the glory of all lands;" but Solomon's labour had been in vain had not the Lord his God prospered the work of his hands. David received the pattern of that holy and beautiful house from the Lord Himself, and gave it to his son who, by the blessing of his father's God, began and gloriously completed the work committed to him. Yet the glory of this marvellous structure was eclipsed by that "spiritual house" which the "greater than Solomon" reared. He alone could build the true tabernacle of God among men; and this great work Jehovah promised that He should accomplish. Hear the word of the Lord upon this subject by the prophet Zechariah: "For thus spake the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is THE BRANCH: and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. v. 12, 13). Glory be to Jesus who hath made His Church "an habitation of God through the Spirit!"

But, further, the Psalmist remarks: "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Is not Christ the Keeper of that holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem? But David proceeds, saying, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep." Our adorable Jesus rose up early, and sat up late. How often might it be said of Him, as it was on one occasion, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed;" and again, "In the daytime He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives." "Cold mountains and the midnight air witnessed the fervour of His prayer;" and O, did not our Lord eat the "bread of sorrows?" How bitterly He complained, saying, "They gave Me gall for My meat, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." Yes, our adorable Redeemer rose up early, sat up late, and ate the bread of sorrows—"for so He (Jehovah the Father) gave His Beloved sleep." It was through this experience of watchfulness and weariness and untold sorrow that our glorious Captain finished the work of our redemption, and then lay His holy flesh to rest in the tomb; and by which also, as by a divine metamorphosis, He transformed death for His people into the sleep of beloved children. Behold, therefore, the text in this light: "It is vain for you"—that is, for you who are sinners—"to rise up early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of sorrows; for so"—and so only—"He giveth His beloved sleep." Our rest from legal labouring is the fruit of our Lord's precious and substitutionary death. He is our true Sabbath; yea, He is like Noah, the Man of our rest, and it is by virtue of His great sacrifice that the saints at the end of "life's little day" sleep the sleep of the beloved. Jehovah's Beloved laboured and watched and sorrowed, and poured out His soul unto death, and slept in the tomb, on behalf of

His dear people, and now they sleep in Him. O blessed, heavenly, enviable sleep, for "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!"

II. Let us now consider the text according to the translation previously named: "FOR SO HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED IN SLEEP." With regard to the things of this life the meaning obviously is—"It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late," for not by over-carefulness and extreme laboriousness does prosperity come, but by the blessing of the Lord, a reasonable diligence in one's lawful avocation, and a due attention to the laws of health; for so He giveth His beloved His countless benefactions in—or through—sleep. But I will pass on to remark that many very choice blessings, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, have been conferred by the Lord upon His dear people in their sleep. The very first inspired record of sleep is most interesting. Listen. We read in the second chapter of the book of Genesis that—"Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." An old divine well remarks concerning Eve's formation, that "the Lord God did not take a bone from the head of Adam, because the wife is not to usurp authority over the husband; nor yet of the foot, for she is not to be made his slave, but a fellow-helper; nor from any anterior part, for she is not *prelatá*, that is, preferred before the man; neither was she taken from any posterior part, for she is not *post posita*, that is, set behind the man; but she was formed of a bone of the side, to show that she is her husband's companion and the wife of his covenant (Mal. ii. 14)—a bone near his heart, to put him in mind of dilection and love." This is, beyond question, a wise and judicious interpretation of the designs of the Almighty's kind providence concerning man's indispensable companion. A wonderful—indeed the most wonderful—and gracious earthly gift of God to Adam and his posterity was Eve, and this choice gift was bestowed upon Adam—God's first beloved earthly son—in his sleep, and a far more precious gift she proved to him (notwithstanding her infirmities) than some of his sons have received in their wakeful hours.

But I turn from this phase of the subject to what is vastly more important, exclaiming with the Apostle, "Behold, I show you a mystery, for I speak concerning Christ and the Church." In the beginning of time, as one says, matter was taken from man to form a woman. And in the fulness of time matter was taken from a woman to make a man, even the Man Christ Jesus, and as out of the side of sleeping Adam Eve was formed, so out of the blood issuing from the side and flesh of our dear dying Christ came His spouse, the Church. Our dear Redeemer's chief care therein was to sanctify and cleanse His bride, and therefore He came by water and by blood. The Lord's dear gift of Eve to Adam entailed no pain and no sorrow upon him. The anæsthetic applied to our great progenitor by the Divine Physician in the first year of the world was infinitely superior to that which Sir James Young Simpson discovered in the

last century, and beside this the healing was both instantaneous and painless. But, alas! the case was far otherwise with our adored second Adam, who, during the inconceivable torture of His immaculate body, and the awful travail of His holy soul, would not so much as taste the "wine mingled with myrrh" to lessen the pain, choosing rather to endure the utmost anguish in bringing many sons and daughters to glory. Indeed, the great Captain of our salvation was, as the sacred Records declare, "made perfect through suffering;" and thus He became the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. Thus His suffering life and vicarious death gave everlasting life to His dearly-loved and chosen spouse, and oh! what a life of sorrow and grief was His! and what a death of shame and anguish He died!

"Thine was a bitter death indeed, Thou hast from hell Thy people freed,
Thou harmless, suffering Lamb of God; And drowned destruction in Thy
blood."—*Hart.*

Thus it was that Jehovah the Father gave His beloved Son and our beloved Saviour and Lord rest from the mighty labours of redemption; and in that sleep of death His Church received the invaluable gifts of grace here and eternal glory hereafter, "For so He giveth His beloved in sleep." But I pass from this to remind you of another great gift which the Lord bestowed in sleep. This gift of which I now speak concerns Abraham and his posterity while time shall last. This great man, the father of the faithful, was made to fall into a deep sleep, during which the Lord confirmed His covenant with him, promised to judge the foes of his descendants after 400 years of oppression, and to bring forth His chosen nation with gladness into the land of promise. "So He giveth His beloved in sleep." Take another illustration. Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, was so favoured of the Lord that he learned the way to heaven in his sleep; he saw, as you will remember, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, with God Himself standing above it. By this vision the patriarch was so far instructed in the mysteries of redemption by the Lord Jesus as to constrain him to exclaim, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" "So He giveth His beloved in sleep." Listen to another Scripture record. We are told that the Lord appeared to Solomon twice, and this, remember, was in sleep, for we read, "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give thee;" and Solomon, passing by the request for riches, honour, length of days, the life of his enemies, worldly emoluments, &c., asked for a wise and understanding heart, for, said he, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out, or to come in." This request pleased the Lord, and He therefore granted his petition, and beyond that gave him such riches and honour as no earthly monarch ever possessed. Even "So He giveth His beloved in sleep." How well did the poet reflect,

"If Solomon for wisdom prayed, Else he some other choice had made,
The Lord before had made him wise; And asked for what the worldlings prize."

Again, going to the chapter which we read, what a revelation God made to Jeremiah in his sleep, saying unto him, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." He also spoke many precious promises concerning the seed of Israel, and revealed the coming of the Just One in that

mysterious language, "A woman shall compass a man;" beside which, by virtue of this mystery of godliness, the precious declaration was made, "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul; and upon this"—said the prophet—"I awaked, and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me." "So He giveth His beloved in sleep."

Never, I think, do I read this precious chapter without remembering a visitation I myself had from the Lord in the night. Some years ago I was feeling deeply in my sleep the burden of sin. O how it oppressed me! Not because I looked upon it as unforgiven, but because I wanted to live near the Lord, being conscious that the very nature of sin separates between God and our souls; and as I groaned under that heavy load, that verse of dear Watts' came with power to my heart—

"Thy wondrous blood, dear dying Christ, And Thou canst bear me where Thou
Can make this load of sin remove; fl'ist
On Thy kind wings, celestial Dove."

I had no sooner expressed the prayer than the pardoning, sanctifying blood of the Lord Jesus was applied, and I was as happy, I think, as Jeremiah. I awoke. It was Lord's day morning; the sun was shining in the heavens, and the Sun of Righteousness was shining with far greater glory in my soul. "So He giveth His beloved in sleep."

Once more. What wonderful instruction the Lord was pleased to give Peter in sleep! This Apostle could not at once allow his heart to expand so far as to believe that the Gentiles were made fellow-heirs of the grace of God. And so, while waiting for dinner, the Lord caused him in a trance to see a sheet let down from heaven, knit at the four corners, which contained all manner of beasts, flying fowl, and creeping things; and a voice said, "Arise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter objected, saying, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean." But the Lord rebuked him, saying, "What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common or unclean." This was done thrice, and the sheet was taken up to heaven, and Peter learnt at last that God had made the Gentiles partakers of His grace. Then the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee; go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them." Peter went, therefore, and preached a sermon whereby Cornelius and his house were saved. "So He giveth His beloved in sleep."

But I want you now to look at this subject in another way. You will see that the gift here mentioned is not universal. The text reads, "So He giveth His beloved sleep." It is a certain truth, whether men like it or not, that God does not love everybody equally; it is madness for anyone to make that assertion with an open Bible before him. While we read in this holy Book, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," I say it is vain for anyone to make such an assertion. While the Lord Jesus Christ says in the infallible page of inspiration, "I lay down My life for the sheep," and the prayer is on record, "I pray for them (namely, the Apostles and all who shall believe through their word to the end of time); I pray not for the world"—I say how wicked it is for people to assert that the Lord Jesus loves everybody with the same distinguishing love. I have known people go so far in their delusions as to say that Christ died for Judas as much as for Peter. "My soul, come thou not into their secret; to their assemblies,

mine honour, be not thou united!" Nevertheless, I thank God for the New Testament revelation of world-wide grace. Time was when God's covenant was only made with Jews; now "to every nation under heaven to hear the gospel sound is given, the call to all extends," according to that blessed quotation of the Apostle from Hosea: "I will call them My people which were not My people; and her beloved which was not beloved: and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there they shall be called the children of the living God." So He giveth His beloved, and His beloved only, both the gospel rest and the rest of eternal glory.

III. Let us now consider our text in the light of its general interpretation and application to the SLEEP OF DEATH. "So He giveth His beloved sleep." What a mercy it is that those who die in the Lord do not really die according to the worst sense of the term. Death is for such persons "hallowed into sleep, and joy surrounds the dying bed." Over and over the Lord Jesus and His Apostles speak of the death of the godly as sleep. Stephen, referring to David, says, "After he had served his day and generation he fell on sleep." Paul says concerning the coming of the Lord the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." To those who have lost dear relatives the same Apostle says, "But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as those that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." "So He giveth His beloved sleep."

"Death lost his sting when Jesus died; When Jesus left the ground, Disarmed, the king of terrors fled, And felt a mortal wound.	And now his office is to wait Between the saints and sin; A porter at the heavenly gate, To let the pilgrims in."
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The dying Christian is often favoured to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The believer is not under the law, but under grace, hence his triumph.

Most of you are aware that our beloved friend, Mrs. Smart, has gone to glory. I have often referred to her during her illness, and not infrequently have I given you a choice saying as it fell from her lips. Hers was a long pilgrimage, for she was in her 88rd year. She must have been a disciple of Christ for at least 70 years, for I remember she once told me that on a certain occasion when quite a little girl (I think in the village of Brasted), when crying to the Lord for mercy, He gave her such a revelation of Himself that she realized for a few minutes His pardoning love. That work, begun so early in life, was carried on, as it always is carried on, to the day of Jesus Christ. A few years after this, being much exercised in mind while going on a journey, she at length passed a building on the way, and saw among many great stones a number of little ones. From her description it seemed to me to be a building not uncommon in some parts of the country, where a number of bricks are used, together with a certain amount of mortar and pebbles; the pebbles appear to be stuck in the mortar, and although insignificant in themselves, are nevertheless necessary to the strength and adornment of the building. Our dear friend at this time felt in her soul very unworthy of everlasting life, but as she looked at those little stones, and realized she could never be a great

stone in the heavenly building, a great yearning was created in her soul that she might form part of that house not made with hands, although, like those small stones in the building before her, she might occupy but the tiniest niche. Her heart's desire was well expressed in the verse,—

"May I be found a living stone In Salem's streets above;	And help to sing before the throne Free grace and dying love."
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Some time since, when speaking with me, she referred to a time of great trial. This trial was in the early days of her widowhood. She said she stood looking over the garden in her loneliness and bereavement, when the Lord gave her this sweet promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." This promise has been blessedly fulfilled. She also exclaimed on this same occasion, "Safe, safe, safe! saved by the blood of Christ! O what a Rock!

"Rock of Ages, shelter me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood,	From Thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Cleansing from its guilt and power."
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Then she added, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." I then said to her, "Mother" (for I often addressed her by that name, for she was for so many years a real mother to me, in the sense that the apostle speaks, in the 16th chapter of Romans, saying, "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." You know that our beloved friend dwelt for several years in the same house with me in the earlier part of my sojourning among you. Thus our acquaintances became very intimate.) But I digress, I said to our friend, "Mother, I am revising a sermon on the words, 'That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings';" she caught up the theme and said, "Oh, who can tell what He suffered!" I replied, "The height of His sorrows and the depth of His love, can never be known till we sing them above." She rejoined, "Then will I sing more sweet, more loud, And Christ shall be my song." Upon many occasions she exclaimed, "O the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of redeeming love! why such mercy to such a sinner as me, so vile a wretch?" When asked by her daughter if she realized the Everlasting Arms to be underneath her, she replied, "O yes;" when questioned if she was still on the Rock, she replied, "Yes, on the Rock, on the Rock, on the Rock! victory, victory! Victory through the blood of the Lamb!" After a pause she said warmly, "I would not give up my hope for all the world calls good or great; what could I do without it?" "Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale, Soon all my mortal powers must fail," and again,

"A few more rolling suns at most, Will land me on fair Canaan's coast,	Where I shall sing the song of grace, And see my glorious Hiding Place."
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At another time she exclaimed, "Lord, take me home." On another, "Cry aloud, cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned, that her warfare is accomplished; for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." He has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." For months our beloved friend was kept in this rapturous frame of mind, with very little variation. Perhaps for a few minutes darkness and questioning would come, and she would at such times cry,

"How can I bear the piercing thought, What if my name should be left out, When Thou for Thine shalt call?	Prevent, prevent it by Thy grace, Be Thou, dear Lord, my Hiding Place, In that trying day."
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Her great joy was the more remarkable because, during many years, none of us who knew her well ever heard her speak the language of assurance till this last illness, when the Lord delivered her. She exclaimed at another time, "Soon shall I cross the Jordan, then will I sing, Hallelujah, praise the Lord. Sweet to look back, and see His countenance shining upon me.

"Yes; I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away,
But on my Lord relying
I hail the happy day."

Yes, I hail the happy day. I long for home." On one occasion she sang this verse with me. She also sang—

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labours have an end
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

"So He giveth His beloved sleep." Never was a child of God delivered more completely from the fear of death by the application of the blood of Christ than our beloved friend, Mrs. Smart. One could not realize that she was so near to the river that has no bridge when in conversation with her. She made every arrangement for her interment, and spoke of going home with the greatest joy. On one occasion the doctor called while I was with her, and she thus addressed him, "O doctor, I have victory through the blood of the Lamb. I am going home, I shall soon be with Jesus; but, doctor, will you have victory through the blood of the Lamb?" Then she plied him with a number of the most solemn and pointed questions, and charged him, in the words of the Lord, to strive to enter in at the strait gate. "I then said to her, "Mother, are you afraid of death?" She turned to me quite sharply, yet lovingly, and repeated, "Afraid of death, why do you ask me that? Indeed no, I have not the slightest fear of death, I long to go home." She expressed an ardent wish that I might, together with her children, be with her when she departed, and I am glad to say that her wish was granted. She explained the reason of that desire, saying, "You can then tell the people that you have seen me go straight home to glory." She sent her love to you all as a people, and I might add that, although one of the most retiring children of God, she nevertheless, during her illness, often followed me aloud in supplication, praying for you all, and especially for the Church of God here. Well, these triumphant departures to glory—and we have been privileged to witness a good many—must confirm our faith in the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God. For my own part, I must confess that I am more than ever in love with the old paths, being persuaded that only by following in them can we find "rest to our souls." Those of us who have tasted the old wine of the kingdom cannot possibly be persuaded to take a draught of what is called "the New Theology," but which in truth is but a new form of demonology. The Lord have mercy on its wicked dupes and abettors, or they will learn to their dismay in the world of ruin those glorious truths which while here they blasphemed. God grant that we all may live by the faith of the Son of God, and at length sleep the sleep of the beloved. Amen.

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