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La M 873

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SERMON PREACHED BY MR. MOXON AT GOWER STREET CHAPEL, LONDON,
ON SUNDAY MORNING, 18th SEPTEMBER, 1892

Text: "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Hosea xiv. 5,6).

I hope that I may be favoured this morning with an interest in your prayers. I also hope that God may fulfil this promise in our hearts, that we may feel it to be so. It is a grand thing to have a little feeling. I want a religion with feeling. A religion without feeling is not of much use, but a religion with feeling we want above all other things. I felt this morning as if I hardly knew how to commence speaking from this text; yet I know there are a number of special things, precious things, in it. I wanted the Lord to come into my heart to enable me to see and feel them. I cannot speak of them unless He does, nor can I say anything that will be of any service to you unless He helps. And we are human. I am sure that every minister wants so to speak that the word shall be received with pleasure and profit, so that the people may thrive and grow thereby. It does seem to me that this is a very precious chapter. I have many a time thought that there is not a sweeter chapter in the whole word of God, taking it as a whole; and there is in it that which must of necessity yield comfort to God's poor, erring, straying ones. It is so when we come to read it over, especially when a little divine light shines upon it and into our poor souls.

Israel, without doubt, are a figurative people, the whole church of God being pointed out. The blessings and promises that were given to Israel are given to the church of God, and I believe that they are given to you and to me. It is the enjoyment, the application, we want. We want to feel in our inmost souls that God has spoken to us, and made us to feel it and enjoy it. It seems to me that Israel had been basely backsliding and had gone astray; and so have we gone astray and turned our back upon God. Are you not, friends, where the Laodicean church was? Many times you have left your first love. There has been something between God and you. Don't you feel ashamed of yourselves? But you find yourself out of hell. Many a time I have thought it a mistake that God should spare such a cumberer of the ground as I am. There is something in this heart which, I confess, I deplore. There is enough to damn my soul to all eternity. I have wondered that the Lord does make His grace to reign over it, above it, and beyond it, subdue it, and sometimes take all clean away. With all my

sighing, crying, and groaning, I feel as if I make no headway at all. Sometimes I fear that there is not a spark of grace in my heart.

Well, now, this text is of a very encouraging character to such poor sinners. The Lord says: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (verse 4). That is just what I want; nobody but God can heal our backslidings. Some people get healed in some sort of a way, but it is not the sort of healing I want. If there is one thing more than another that I desire, it is this: that I may be healed aright. You know there is such a thing as getting inured, hardened, accustomed, to a thing - such a thing as having our hands burned, and then the part burned does not produce any feeling. We read of some that had "their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. iv.2). You know that, when a hot iron has been put upon the flesh, it makes such an impression that the blood does not flow through, and that part of the flesh has not the same sensitiveness as the other. I do not want that kind of healing. I want the Lord to be my Healer. I want the balm of Gilead to be applied to my wounds, the precious blood of Jesus Christ; I want the application of the blessed Spirit. If you look into this prophecy, you will find that Ephraim went to Assyria to be healed when he discovered his wounds. Ah, we have been guilty of this many times: going here and there, thinking we shall get a little ease, comfort, and pleasure; but it will not do - God forbid that it should do! I do not want healing in that way. I would rather go to the grave hanging my head down as a bulrush, and be healed by God at last, than be healed by carnal merriment, the company and pleasures of the world.

Look at the poor woman with the issue of blood. She had spent all her living without relief, and at last tried to touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment. Upon so doing, virtue goes out of Him and heals her in a moment. What a blessed thing it is to get near to Jesus! What a mercy it is if we can get to the bottom hem of His garment and receive virtue from Him!

Well, now, I have no doubt that there are those here this morning that want healing, the precious atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and want the Lord to speak to them as He did to that poor woman who came behind Him weeping. How He talked to her, but what a while He was before He came to that blessed sentence: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke vii. 50). We want the Lord to speak with His own mouth and say: "I am thy salvation" (Psa.xxxv.3). "I will heal their backsliding" - as though He said: "I have the remedy. Nobody else has it to any purpose."

Then comes in the language of our text, and in it we see how God, by His blessed Spirit, visits His people, and what the results of His visits are when they come into the soul. "I will be as the dew unto Israel."

Now let us try to speak about this dew, and then speak a little about the effects of this dew when it comes: "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Perhaps this is going further than some of you can speak of. You may be ready to say even now: "It cuts me off. I cannot say it is with me as the text says. I am afraid that I shall be left out, left behind." You never will if you are God's people. Never, never! God does not cast out or leave out His people. He may try them and prove them and also cause them to be searched and exercised. He may cause them at times to have many fears, but He will never cast them behind; He will never take their names from the Lamb's book of life. Blessed be God, He comes again, here a little and there a little; and they find that which is encouraging to their poor souls.

First of all, we have a promise of the Lord's blessing upon Israel under the figure of dew. "I shall be as the dew unto Israel." I believe that there is intended here the special operation of God the Holy Ghost upon the soul. I am at a point about this, that God's Spirit visits His people, and that His Spirit is fully set forth by the figure in this text - dew. There does not seem much in that, does there? Dew - a very little thing is that, perhaps unobserved by some. It may be that some in this chapel have never thought much or observed much about the dew. But there is something in dew, something remarkable, effectual, special in dew; and if we look at it aright - God enable us to do so! - we shall see there is something here which describes the work of the Holy Ghost upon a poor sinner's heart.

You will remember that, when Isaac had got to the end of his earthly career, and had to leave that precious legacy to his firstborn, how this blessing of dew came into the legacy. Isaac said: "Come hear now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven." And when Esau came in, he says: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father?" Isaac answered: "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above" (Gen.xxvii.26-28, 38, 39). As much as to say: "Now, if thou get that, thou gettest everything:"

* That is, of a temporal nature. - Transcriber's note.

all the fruits of the earth, all belonging thereto, plenty of corn and wine; for thou shalt never want, thou shalt never be brought to beggary and poverty, if thou gettest the dew of heaven."

Moses, speaking of the honour and majesty of God, says: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew" (Deut.xxxii.2). There is something in the dew which is in the nature of a distillation, as in distilleries. So it seems to be God's great distillery. It is the dew of heaven. The sweetness of the blessed Spirit descends like the gentle dew, remarkably silent and quiet. The Spirit of the living God comes down in a quiet way, not at all noisy. Some people are easy only when they are making a big noise and show, but the Spirit of the living God descends silently and secretly.

We read that there was a great and strong wind, then an earthquake, and after that a fire. But the Lord was not in wind, earthquake, or fire. After the fire there was a still small voice, and God was in that voice, that quiet voice (I Kings xix.11,12). Have you not found it in this way - quietly whispering? I believe that the greatest blessing that ever God gives to His people here on earth is given in a quiet, silent way. Perhaps the poor soul is up to the neck - may be over head - in trouble and distress, and burdened with guilt, fear, and condemnation; and the Lord just comes and whispers something in that poor heart which stays the tempest and the tumult. He seems to have said: "Peace, be still" (Mark iv.39), and immediately there it is. It has been so in my own experience. I can go back to times when the Lord has dropped into my heart just like gentle dew. Sometimes when I have been sitting in the chapel as you are now and God's servants have been preaching, and what they have said has seemed to come with such an echo to suit my case and my state, and I have felt my cup to run over. I have felt as if I could get up there and then in my pew and bless God for having sent His sergant to say such things to me, just as if it were only for me, especially for me, above and beyond all others.

Again, I can go to places where I have been filled with trouble, filled to the brim, filled with sorrow, and I have taken up a book by some godly man, not thinking much about what would be the result; and, perhaps, before I had read a page or two, my soul would undergo a sweet change, the tempest subside, and all those fears vanish, and God would warm my heart with a sense of His love - all done silently, nobody but God acquainted with it. Have not you often felt it to be so, friends? These are sweet, soul-comforting times, when God comes down like the silent dew into your souls.

Now, again, dew is of a very softening nature. It comes and it rests upon the trees, upon the plants, upon the stalks; it gets into the roots, goes down to the bottom, and it is all done so gently, yet so effectually, so softening, and so mollifying. The Holy Spirit of God says: "I will be as the dew." Don't you feel sometimes as barren, as hard, and as cold as the very stones upon which you are walking. You cannot alter it. Do whatever you can, you cannot alter it. You have tried reading, singing, hearing; you have tried loneliness, you have tried company; and whatever you try, you cannot alter it. When the Lord does a certain thing in a certain way, we naturally think that, when we are in similar circumstances, we must get in that very place again and get the blessing in the same way as we did before. Many times I have been disappointed in that way. When the Word of God has been made a blessing to my soul in the reading of it, I have doubled the leaves down, I have underlined it with pen and ink, I have made a cross on both sides, and I have said: "Now I shall go there again and have another blessing there." But when I have gone in my trouble, distress, and darkness, what could I get? Nothing at all. And so you will find you may turn leaves down, make your arrangements to have this and that company, and you may have precious and sweet communion from your meeting, and you will say: "I will have another time like that;" but you find it a barren, unprofitable time.

Just the same, perhaps, when you hear a servant of God, and your poor soul begins to warm and attends all the time; and at another time you hear the same man and you are glad when he concludes; for it is miserable to sit in the place and hear such poor, paltry stuff! What does this prove? It proves that our God is a Sovereign, and it is only as the dew comes, the Spirit comes, that joy and life and unction descend upon the word. I have been exceptionally troubled sometimes with regard to this matter. But the way in which God deals with us shows that He is a Sovereign.

Again, I have had at times (blessed be His holy Name!) such access at His footstool that I have wanted Him to come and take me right away out of this world to live and reign with Him for ever. I have been enabled to say, with the apostle Paul: "to die is gain" (Phil.i.21). And, more than that, I have paced my room backwards and forwards, uttering this prayer: "Come, Lord; come, Lord Jesus; come quickly" - just as though I have had enough of the world and of the things of the world, as though I could leave wife, family, friends - yes, all; leave them gladly and wend my way to eternal bliss. Ah, when you

have had such a sense as this, such communications with the Lord as these, and they pass away, and then you try to pray - why, you feel that you might just as well pray to a lump of wood; you have no more feeling and no more power. What does it show but that He is a sovereign God? He only can command the clouds to rain and the dew to fall. But you see His blessed promise stands good: "I will be as the dew unto Israel."

Well, now, there is something else about the dew which I wish to notice, and that is this - that the dew is generally the most copious and the most plentiful in dry, sunshiny weather. Have you noticed that, when it is tempestuous and boisterous, you will find no dew; and that when it is shiny, clear, and calm in the heavens, there is generally a plentiful dew? I have sometimes thought of what Mr. Hart says:

"So gentle sometimes is the flame,
That, if we take not heed,
We may unkindly quench the same,
We may, my friends, indeed." (30)

Well, I do believe that, when there are storms and tempests, when there are wranglings and unpleasantnesses in a church, there is very little of the communication of the Spirit of God.

Then, again, the silvery drops of dew are to be found upon the branches and leaves, but very little upon the stalks. Do not you find it to be so? I have found it to be so. I think there is a good deal in that experience, "the rebellious dwell in a dry land" (Psa.lxviii.6). Have I before me any of those rebellious ones, those cantankerous ones, those that are always dissatisfied with everything and with everybody? Let me, then, just ask you a few questions: Do you feel any dew descend upon your spirit? Is there any secret communication with God? Are you at any time blessedly led to behold the worth of a precious Christ? Do you know what it is to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, to "creep beside Him as a worm" (950)? The dew softens the hard heart, the proud nature, and it will produce a tender, sympathizing, compassionate spirit. I am sure it will, wherever the Spirit of grace rests. Well, now, our text says: "I will be as the dew."

What are the results? The first result is that "he shall grow as the lily"; the second is that "he shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Now these two things appear to be in opposition one to the other. It does not seem as if such results would or could take place as are set forth here. "He shall grow as the lily." It is an upward growth. I understand a lily to be a very weak plant - a plant which does not rise very high, but is at the same time very sweet, clean, white, and fresh. Do you know anything about this growing as the lily?

Is there any upward growth at all? Oh, friends, just examine yourselves. When the Holy Spirit descends upon the soul, there will be an upward growth; and that growth will be a tender growth. It may be very weak - yes, many of God's people know it is. But, blessed be His holy Name, if you are weak and helpless in your upward growth, the Lord will take care of that growth. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa.xlii.3). Let me also tell you, He will see to it that the leaven which He puts into the meal shall do its work effectually (Matt.xiii.33). Here is something encouraging for you little ones. Now if there are any big ones, tall ones, strong and great ones, this text is somewhat discouraging for you. I am at a point here that, "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke xviii.17). The Lord will "bring down high looks" (Psa.xviii.27), and weaken the strong. Yes, the Psalmist says: "He weakened my strength in the way" (Psa.cii.23). You once thought you could do something; I did. I loved to be up early in the morning and late at night. I was full of zeal, wanting to convert my fellow creatures, although people were very slow and remiss; I was anxious for their salvation. What a lot of nonsense I have believed in and acted upon in my young days, preaching to people and telling them to give their souls to God. But He weakened my strength in the way, showed me little by little my helplessness, weakness, and emptiness - that all my comfort was in Him, all my strength from Him, and that without Him I could do nothing (John xv.5). I found out that all my exhortations were of no value unless God the Holy Ghost came with power into the soul.

"He shall grow as the lily." What a grand thing to have a tender sprout, an upward growth, to grow Christ-like! A grand thing the lily! The Lord Jesus Christ says: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (Song ii.1). When the Holy Ghost comes down upon the heart of a poor sinner, it produces a white effect, so to speak, and an upward growth. And it is a growth in conformity with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is seen in a seeking after Him, a hungering and thirsting for Him; and every drop of dew that descends into your souls will bring you where Paul was brought, "that I may win Christ, and be found in Him" (Phil.iii.8,9). Every time this dew distils and touches your souls, you will say: "O that I may *be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness,'but seeking, thirsting, going after Christ's!" No matter how many communications you may have from the Lord Jesus Christ, you will want more. It is of necessity the case. The more we have of Christ, the more we need of the Spirit of Christ, of the things of Christ; the more

we want of the upward growth and to be like the lily.

I remember an old veteran coming to me one Sunday morning after chapel, and he said: "I have been reading in the prophecy, and it says: 'They shall walk up and down in His name' (Zech.x. 12). Can you tell me what it means? I think it means that they shall grow up in the Lord and grow down in themselves - up and down." And he went on to say: "There is another passage which I think is in harmony with it - where it is said that a man 'shall go in and out, and find pasture' (John x.9) - that is it, out of themselves and into Him. And that is the way the Lord has been leading me for forty years in the wilderness."

Now, how is it with any of you that are grey-headed and have got to your seventy years? Is it a growing down in self and a growing up in the Lord? Is it a growing into Jesus Christ and out of yourselves? Don't you want, as it were, to cast yourselves away and to feel that there is a dying to self, an abhorring of self? Job had got a long way when he said: "I abhor myself" (Job xlii.6). It is not everybody in religion that has got as far as that, and it is the grace of God alone that must make any individual abhor himself, and to say with Job: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is a growing out of self; but there was also a time when Job could say: "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (Job xix.25). Blessed be God, there is a growing up as the lily.

The time has gone, and I will not now attempt to deal with the other part of the text. I would just say, What a striking contrast the next figure is! But there is no contradiction in the word of God; and you that have a living experience of the blessed Spirit's work know that there is no contradiction in God's Word. That is the beauty of it.

Well, now, may you reflect upon it, may your meditations be sweet; and may you be enabled to see that all phases of the text are reflected in other parts of the Scripture. God grant His blessing to rest upon you and me and upon all His people!

Amen.