

THE POURING OUT OF THE SPIRIT UPON ZION'S OFFSPRING

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"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isaiah 44:3-5

The promises of the Gospel are absolute and unconditional. If it were not so, it would cease to be the Gospel, or be so only in name. But you may say, "What, then, are there no conditional promises in the Bible?" Yes; an abundance of them. You will find one chapter (Deuteronomy 28) in which they are scattered in the richest profusion. But you will remark this, that wherever there is a condition, there must also be a penalty; for if there be a reward for obedience, there must be punishment for disobedience. The Law, therefore, which holds out the conditional promise, has attached to it also a curse, that being the penalty of disobedience to its righteous demands. Of this, the chapter to which I have already alluded gives the most pregnant proof; for we read in it, "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field." (Deut. 28:3) But we also read, "If thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field." (Deut. 28:16) Every Jew that we meet bears, we may almost say, this chapter stamped upon his face, and cries aloud, "Would you know the effect of a conditional promise, look at me. I could not fulfill the condition; therefore I suffer the penalty." But the Gospel has no curse; therefore the Gospel has no condition. The Gospel is a message of mercy from God to men. The literal meaning of the word is "good news," "gland tidings." To whom? To those who are so deeply sunk in the Adam-fall as to be unable to lift themselves up or out. But it would not be good news if it set man to do what he has no power to perform. Suppose a man were to fall into a deep well, and you took a rope and let it down within five yards of him as he was struggling in the water, and kept calling out to him, "Now, my good man, if you will only climb up those steep and slippery sides for five yards, you may get hold of the rope, and then I will pull you out." Would that be the way to save the man, or to mock him? Or if a person who could not swim had fallen into a river and was drowning, while you kept standing on the bank and calling to him, "If you will only swim a few yards towards me, I will come in and rescue you:" would not that be adding insult to

barbarity? Those are two conditional promises, and you see how suitable they are to a drowning, dying man. So if the Lord had attached to the promises of the Gospel a condition of this kind, that he would save us provided we first rendered to him a pure obedience, we being as unable to render him that pure obedience as the man would be to climb up those five slippery yards of the well; God, instead of saving us by the Gospel, would only mock us, and the Gospel would be to us even worse than the Law, as insulting us with the offer of a salvation which it could not give and we could not take. The promises, therefore, of the Gospel are, and must be from its very nature, absolute and unconditional.

But though they are thus necessarily unconditional, they are also descriptive, or what I may perhaps call characteristic: that is, they describe characters, and are addressed to persons in whom there is a certain feeling, or what is termed experience, which, we have reason to believe, God the Spirit has wrought in them. I do not mean to say that all are such, but many of them are. For instance, in the words before us, the Lord gives a promise that he will "pour water." But upon whom? "Upon him that is thirsty." That he will pour "floods." Upon whom? "Upon the dry ground." There we have an absolute promise that the Lord will pour out water; but we have also the distinctive mark given that the water is to be poured out upon him that is thirsty. The Lord declares unconditionally that he will give "floods;" but, he adds, "upon the dry ground," to show the character of the ground upon which those floods are poured.

Our text, I admit, is somewhat long, but at the same time is so continuous and connected, that if I were to shorten it I should but break it to pieces. I must, therefore, take it as it is; and, in endeavoring, with God's blessing, to open it, I shall direct your minds to these three particulars:—

- I. First, the promise itself, that God will "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" that he will "pour his Spirit upon thy seed, and his blessing upon thine offspring."
- II. Secondly, the immediate effects of the Lord's pouring water upon the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: that "they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."
- III. Thirdly, its lasting and more permanent fruits: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

I. I have just alluded to the distinctive and characteristic nature of many of the promises attached to the Gospel, for all are not of that character, and have in a few words pointed out how this is

one of those distinctive characteristic promises. I have, therefore, with God's blessing, now to show the character that is stretched beneath the line of the promise, and upon whom he has declared he will pour water; and this is at once pointed out by the striking expression, "the thirsty."

i. Thirst, as a feeling of the soul, in a spiritual sense, is certainly indicative of divine life. It is as impossible, spiritually viewed, for a man dead in sin to thirst after a living God, as for a corpse in the grave-yard to thirst after a draught of cold water from the well. I know for myself that such a feeling as thirsting after God had not place in my bosom, until the Lord was pleased to quicken my soul into spiritual life. I had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; I had seen him in creation, in the starry sky, in the roaring sea, in the teeming earth; I had read of him in the Bible; I had learnt his existence by education and tradition; and I had some apprehensions of his holiness in my natural conscience; but as to any spiritual thirsting after him, any earnest desire to fear him, know him, believe in him, or love him,—no such experience or feeling, I can say for myself, ever dwelt in my bosom. I loved the world too dearly to look to him who made it, and myself too warmly and affectionately to seek him who would bid me crucify and mortify it. A man, therefore, I am well convinced, must be made alive unto God by spiritual regeneration, before he can experience any such sensation as is here conveyed by the figure "thirst," or know anything of the Psalmist's feelings when he cried, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Ps. 42:1,2)

The word "thirst" conveys to our mind this idea—desire; but a desire of such a kind, that it must be gratified, or life must cease. You may desire many things, but those desires may never be gratified, and yet you not be the worse for their non-gratification. For instance, you may desire a better house, better clothes, better furniture, a larger income: many desires may spring up in your mind after a variety of objects, the withholding of which will not effect life, or health, or happiness. But thirst, I speak now of bodily thirst, is a desire that must be gratified, or death must ensue, as it has ensued to many a shipwrecked sailor, and many a wanderer in the Arabian or African desert, where whole caravans have perished of thirst, and left their bleached bones to proclaim their death and the manner of it. Thus the Holy Ghost, in using the figure "thirst," not merely intends thereby to convey the idea of the newborn soul desiring God, but with such an intense desire that it must have God or die. "Give me Christ or else I die," has been the prayer and cry of many a spiritually stranded sailor on the rocky islet where there was no water; of many a spiritual wanderer "in the great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents and scorpions and drought." Now wherever God has raised up in the soul this spiritual thirst after himself, he certainly will answer that desire, for "the desire of the righteous shall be granted." (Prov. 10:24) His own invitation is,

"Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters;" (Isa. 55:1) and Jesus himself says with his own blessed lips, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." (John 7:37) Nay, he opened his ministry by pronouncing a blessing on such, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6)

ii. But the word "thirsty" in our text does not so much refer to a soul that is thirsty, as land that is thirsty, that being a frequent metaphor to describe a dry, parched soil, as the Psalmist speaks of "a dry and thirsty land where no water is;" (Ps. 63:1) and as Isaiah declares that "the thirsty land shall become springs of water." (Isa. 35:7) The spiritual meaning of both figures is much the same, but the words "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty" seem more applicable to land dry and parched up than to the human body. Nothing can be more simple or expressive than this transference of thirst to the natural soil, for as the human body thirsts after water, so does the dry, parched ground thirst after rain. We know what that land is, and necessarily must be, which the rain rarely visits. There are countries in the globe which scarce ever experience the blessing of rain, or of any substitute by irrigation from rivers; and these are stricken with the curse of continual barrenness, because no showers fall from the skies, and no bounteous Nile, its substitute, spreads itself over their bosom. There are, therefore, doomed to perpetual sterility, as if they ever lie under the wrath of the Almighty. Such by nature is the soul of man. Like those desert tracks to which I have alluded, such as the great Arabian desert, or the vast African Sahara, on which no rain from heaven falls, the soul of man by nature is a barren wilderness; nor can it, except by rain from heaven falling upon it, spiritually produce herb, or fruit, or flower such as God can approve. The saint of God, when taught by the Holy Spirit, is often made to feel that his heart is this barren wilderness. Do what he can, do what he may, he cannot cause any one fruit of the Spirit to spring up in heart, lip, or life. He is therefore obliged from sheer necessity to look to the Giver of all good, and sometimes earnestly cry to him with groans and tears, that he would pour water upon the thirsty soil and make it fruitful and productive of every good word and work.

The Lord, then, has promised to "pour water upon him that is thirsty." Let us look a little more closely at the promise here given; and as we have examined the word "thirsty," let us now denote a few minutes' attention to the figure of "water,"—an emblem which the Blessed Spirit has so frequently employed in the word of truth, and we may say has in an especial manner consecrated to his own use by designating thereby his own operations. Water, then, is the standing figure throughout the Scripture to represent the operations and the influences of the Holy Spirit, and is most beautifully adapted for that purpose from its peculiar nature and properties. A few of these are worth considering.

1. First, water has a purifying effect. Our bodies, our clothes, our

houses, the streets of our town are all purified by the crystal element. Water is indispensable to cleanliness of every kind. Not only every tree, plant, herb, and flower, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, but even the air itself is washed and purified by the descending showers. The natural creation would, as it were, rot and fester under its own filth, were it not continually bathed by millions of purifying drops from the sky. So in grace. How is the heart of man, rotting and festering as it is by nature and practice in all manner of uncleanness, to be purified from the guilt and filth and love of sin, but by the washing of regeneration, by the pouring out upon it of the Holy Spirit, according to that gracious promise? "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (Ezek. 36:25) We should ever bear in mind that not only must the soul be washed in the blood of Christ from outward guilt, but must be also sanctified by the washing of regeneration from inward filth; and these two go together, for from the wounded side of Jesus there flowed both blood and water—

"The first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter;
The fountain's but one."

2. And how fertilizing is water! What crop can be produced except by the aid of the rain that falls from heaven or of the river that irrigates the land? So in grace. No fertility is there in our heart by nature. We cannot even raise up a spiritual thought, or give birth to a gracious desire. Sterile are the lips to a feeling word, barren the hands to an acceptable action, except as God is pleased to make us partakers of his Spirit and grace, and to work in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. As then the rain fertilizes the otherwise barren soil, so does the Holy Ghost fertilize, so to speak, the dry and arid soil of the heart by communicating to it a principle of fruitfulness. Thus we read of the fruit of the Spirit, such as "love, joy, peace," etc., (Gal. 5:22) and that it is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" (Eph. 5:9) clearly showing that without his gracious operations there is neither goodness, truth, and righteousness. So we read, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." (Isa. 45:8) It is the dropping of the heavens from above, and the pouring down of righteousness from the skies that bring forth salvation in the heart, and make righteousness spring up as a fruitful crop.

3. How softening, too, is water! When the earth is parched by long and continued drought, and the clods of genial rain emulate the very stones for hardness, how the genial rain that falls from the skies penetrates into their iron pores, and with gentle yet with irresistible force softens, crumbles, and breaks them down into a mellow tilth. An unobserved miracle! Every drop doing its work, and millions combining to produce an effect so marvelous! Sweet figure of the softening operations of the blessed Spirit,

making the conscience tender, the heart broken, and the spirit contrite.

4. And how refreshing water is! To bathe in the cool stream when assailed by the dogstar's fervent heat, when nature herself faints and languishes under the rays of the burning sun, how refreshing! How the languid nerves of the wearied artizan become restrung, as the pores of the skin are cleansed from the sweat and dust that have begrimed it! So how refreshing to the soul are manifestations of God's goodness and love, as applied by the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit! "The washing of water by the word" not only washes the soul from the guilt and filth of sin, but refreshes and revives every languishing, fainting grace.

5. And water also, when drunk during severe thirst, when the mouth is parched and the throat husky and dry, how grateful, how delightful the draught! The testimony of all travelers who have explored the deserts of Australia concurs in speaking of the delight with which water is drunk when found. Even our limited experience in this land of cloud and rain, where a dripping sky is continually refilling our brooks and wells, is enough to teach us how sweet a cup of cold water may be—sweeter far than the toper's morning dram or the drunkard's nightly glass. How gratefully it removes all the painful feelings of thirst. The parched mouth, the dry throat, the racking headache, how they are all removed by a draught of water! So it is with the soul. How dry and parched the throat sometimes is in a spiritual sense, and how a draught from Bethlehem's well at once removes those painful feelings under which it has languished!

Water, therefore, we readily perceive, is a most beautiful and expressive figure of the influences and operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul. And this leads me to think that when the Lord said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5) he did not mean that a man must be born of baptismal water, but of that which water, as a figure, represents. No greater or more delusive figment has been introduced into the Church than what is usually called "baptismal regeneration," the main pillar of which is alleged to be the text which I have just quoted. Let me, then, drip a few words upon the subject. When the Lord speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit, he does not mean thereby baptismal water, or the literal element of water at all, but the influences of the blessed Spirit as distinguished from his divine Person. The soul at regeneration is born of a spiritual influence, called by Peter "an incorruptible seed," and not only so, but positively and immediately of God the Holy Ghost, as a distinct Person in the Godhead. This influence the Lord calls "water," as he spoke to the woman of Samaria of "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," (John 4:14) and as he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) What in the world has literal water to do with a spiritual birth? How can a few drops of water, or a river full, whether the body be sprinkled

by it or immersed in it, open a man's eyes, ears, or heart to see, hear, or feel spiritual things? It must at best be a corruptible birth that is produced by a corruptible agency, and can no more save or sanctify the soul, than such a new birth as Nicodemus asked the Lord about if it were in any way possible.

iii. But the Lord adds that he will pour "floods upon the dry ground." How often does the soul, born and taught of God, feel that it is this "dry ground!" It would fain be fruitful in every good word and work; it would be adorned with every grace of the Spirit within, and with every good and godly fruit without. Let no one think that the child of God is careless or indifferent either as to inward or outward fruit. There is nothing too holy, too heavenly, too spiritual, or too gracious which the child of grace would not desire inwardly to experience and outwardly produce. But he feels that he cannot by any exertion of his own produce this fruitfulness after which he sighs. As well might a barren field convert itself into a fruitful garden, without being tilled by human hand or without rain from the sky, as a soul that knows and feels its own barrenness produced by its own exertions a crop of the fruits of righteousness. But the Lord that knows the desire of the heart and its inward mourning over its own barrenness, has given in the text a sweet and gracious promise, "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." A partial shower would not be enough. The dry ground would soon absorb a few drops of summer rain. Floods must come either from the skies, or from the streams of that river which makes glad the city of God, to produce this mighty change. In the promise, then, that he will pour floods, the Lord has pledged to give enough to soften and mollify the hardest, driest, most hardened heart. Thus, as Job said, "God maketh my heart soft;" (Job 23:16) and the Psalmist, speaking of the earth as the type of the soul, says, "Thou makest it soft with showers." (Ps. 65:10) Till the heart, then, is made soft from above, it remains barren and unfruitful. These "floods" are the promises poured into the soul, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the manifestations of Christ and of his atoning blood, the inflowings of grace as superabounding over all the aboundings of sin, and the flowing of peace as a river into the contrite spirit.

iv. But the Lord, as though he would not leave us at any uncertainty what he means by pouring water and floods, has added, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." The Lord here does not seem to address this promise to godly parents so much as to Zion viewed spiritually as the mother of God's family. Thus we read, "Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." (Gal. 4:26) And thus God, speaking from heaven to Zion, his earthly abode below, says to her, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed." Zion, the Church, might be looking round and saying, "O where is my spiritual seed? Where are my children? How few in number! Shall I ever be blessed with a more numerous spiritual progeny? As one is taken home, shall I bear another on my knees?" The Lord then to reassure the heart of his Zion that he

will not leave her childless, here promises that he will pour his Spirit upon her seed; that there shall rise up children who will call her blessed; that she shall have spiritual sons and daughters, who "shall gather themselves together and come to her." (Isa. 41:18) He thus fulfills his gracious promise: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." (Isa. 54:1) God has always had and ever will have a Church on earth. The promise given to Jesus was, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed;" "he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." (Isa. 53:10,11) We sometimes doubt and fear, seeing the low state of the Church and the paucity of real Christians, whether soon the Lord will have any to fear and love his great name. But he is faithful to his promise, and would sooner raise up children unto Abraham of the very stones of the street than "break his covenant or alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Once has he sworn by his holiness," and he need not repeat the oath, "that he will not lie unto David." (Ps. 89:34,35) When our heads lie in the grave, Jesus will have a seed to serve him, (Ps. 22:30) and Zion shall still be a fruitful mother of children.

v. But what is it "to pour out the Spirit," and what does the Spirit do when he is poured out? The Spirit is "poured out" when he is poured into the soul; this is always followed, as well as known, by certain effects. I will name a few of these.

1. The first is conviction of sin. "When he is come, he will reprove [margin, "convince"] the world of sin." (John 16:8) When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit attended the word with power, the hearers "were pricked to the heart." It was not a gentle prick, as with a point of a pin, but a stabbing to the heart as with a dagger or a piercing as with a sword, as the word means. Indeed, it was "the twoedged sword" in their conscience, of which we read that it "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow." (Heb. 4:12) Thus was the publican pierced with guilt in the temple; the jailer at Phillippi; and Paul himself when the Law entered his conscience, and for three days, from distress of soul, he neither ate nor drank.

2. He also pours out his Spirit upon Zion's seed as a Spirit of grace and of supplications. This is expressly given, according to his own promise, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplications." (Zech. 12:10) This the Lord always pours out upon the soul when he is pleased to quicken it into spiritual life. When he would give to Ananias the strongest proof of Paul's conversion, he said, "Behold, he prayeth." I felt and found this in myself as the very first mark and evidence of my soul being made alive unto God, that he poured this Spirit of prayer and supplication upon me. Before this, I said my prayers regularly enough; but I never knew what spiritual prayer meant, nor what it was to pour

out my heart before God.

3. But in pouring out the Spirit, the Lord also pours it out upon the soul as a spirit of faith; for faith we are expressly told (Eph. 2:8) is "the gift of God," and is declared by the Holy Ghost to be "a fruit of the Spirit." (Gal. 5:22) The Gospel is only in this way made "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Thus without the Spirit, there is no faith; and without faith, there is no salvation. Without this spirit of faith, we can neither believe nor speak, that is, acceptably to God and to his people, according to the language of the Apostle "we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Cor. 4:13) There is a natural faith and a spiritual faith; a faith in the head and a faith in the heart; a faith of tradition, superstition, and will-worship, and a faith that works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, unites to Christ, and the end of which is the salvation of the soul.

4. In pouring out his Spirit upon Zion's seed, the Lord bestows upon it also a good hope through grace; for the Spirit reveals Christ, his love, and grace, and blood, and by thus inwardly manifesting him, raises up a sweet hope in his salvation, "as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil." (Heb. 6:19)

5. But in pouring out of his Spirit, he especially pours into the soul the heavenly gift and divine grace of love, for that is the greatest blessing that he can bestow, being the gift of himself, who is love. All other gifts and graces fall short of this, for we read, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13)

But I by no means intend to limit the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit to those which I have already named, for, in pouring out his Spirit upon Zion's seed, he pours out therewith every spiritual blessing that there is in his heart or in his hands to bestow. There is not a single favor in the bosom of God towards his Zion that is not virtually contained in the pouring out of his Spirit upon her. I say virtually, because it is not always actually, or at least in experimental feeling and enjoyment. He adds, therefore—
vi. "And my blessing upon thine offspring;" for most certainly when he pours out his Spirit he pours his blessing also. And how expressive the word "blessing!" When God blesses what favor does he keep back? What good does he not bestow? When he said to Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee," what more could he say to assure him that he should be blessed with a sense of his presence and love here, and with the eternal enjoyment of himself hereafter? "Let them curse, but bless thou?" (Ps. 109:28) Whatever earthly good you may enjoy, without the blessing of God it will but prove a curse; whatever afflictions fall to your earthly lot, if God bless, they must all eventually be made a blessing. Nor is this blessing niggardly given, for the Lord has here promised that he will pour it out! It shall be given as profusely and as abundantly as the Spirit himself. Nor shall Zion

doubt either the blessing itself or the source whence it comes, for it carries its own evidence, shines in the light of its own testimony, and manifests itself by its own effects. And does not the contrast between the dry ground and the promised showers of blessing enhance it all the more? Your very barrenness and sterility make the promise all the more suitable and therefore all the more sweet. If you look into yourself, a barren wilderness meets your view. If you look up, you see the clouds of blessing floating in the pure sky. You see that the Lord has promised to pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. You beg of him to fulfill that promise to your soul. You have no other plea but his own word of promise, no other recommendation but your own miserable barrenness. He enables you to cry to him. He listens to that cry, and in his own time pours water upon your thirsty soul and floods upon your dry and parched heart. Oh, may a sense of our poverty and destitution be ever a means, in his sacred hand, of leading us to seek that blessing which he alone can bestow!

II. But let me now show what are the immediate effects of the Lord's pouring water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground—"They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

i. The Lord's people are spoken of here as at once "springing up" under the influence of the water poured and of the floods given. We cannot mistake the spiritual meaning of the figure, as it is so clear and certain. In those burning regions where rains does not fall at all seasons from the skies, as in our dripping clime, the effect of copious showers falling upon the parched vegetation is almost miraculous. A few days completely reverse the scene, and on every side vegetation springs up as if it started with gigantic growth out of the bosom of the heated soil. To this the figure in the text alludes—"They shall spring up," that is Zion's children, "as among the grass," with all that young and active growth which so clearly manifests the power and blessing of God. But I think we may take the words as chiefly applicable to the springing up of the graces of the Spirit in the heart, which before hung, as it were, their drooping heads, and lay hidden beneath the grass by which they were covered; for you will observe that it does not say that they sprang up "as the grass," but "among the grass." What the grass is I shall presently show.

1. The first grace that springs up is a godly fear of God's great name. This is the first fruit of the grace of God in the soul, and is therefore called "the beginning of wisdom," and "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." Before the Lord was pleased to communicate his grace to your soul, you had no godly, reverential, filial awe and fear of his great and terrible Name. You might have had remorse of conscience, fears of hell, dismal apprehensions of the wrath to come; but you had no holy awe upon your spirit, no realizing, believing, abiding sense of the power and presence, majesty and greatness, purity and holiness, of the great and glorious self-existing Jehovah, who fills the

heaven and earth with his glory. This is a new covenant grace, according to the Lord's own word by the prophet Jeremiah, where he has promised to put his fear in the hearts of those with whom he makes an everlasting covenant. (Jer. 32:40) No sooner, then, does the rain come and the flood is poured forth, than a godly fear of the great name of Jehovah springs up in the heart, as a flower in Spring shoots through the dry tangled grass.

2. By the side of this godly fear, there springs up into active exercise faith, of which I have before spoken as the gift of God. It is true that faith deals at first more with the terrors of the law and the manifestations of God's displeasure against sin, than with the promises and truths of the Gospel; it is true that at first it more regards God as an angry Judge than as a loving Father and eternal Friend; but let us not forget that there is but "one faith;" (Eph. 4:5) and that the difference of feeling does not arise from the difference of faith, but of the objects presented to it. Faith is the eye of the soul; and as it is the same eye which views objects that give pain and objects which produce pleasure, so it is the same faith which believes the law as believes the gospel, which credits the threatenings as well as credits the promises. But this faith often, so to speak, droops and hangs its head amid the grass, for want of those genial showers which alone can make it spring and grow. The Apostle blessed God because the faith of the Thessalonian believers grew exceedingly. (2 Thess. 1:3) But why was it but because "The Gospel came not unto them in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance?" (1 Thess. 1:5) It is impossible for faith to grow unless the Spirit is poured out and the blessing of God given, but then it at once springs up into active and vigorous growth.

3. But there is another grace of which I have before spoken that often lies hidden under the dry and withered grass, which well nigh buries it under its spiry stem. This grace is hope; and a most blessed grace it is, for it has the special privilege of entering within the veil. Earth is too narrow a spot for hope to abide in; it seeks the skies, and taking firm hold of those divine realities which are within the veil, it patiently expects what it sees not. (Rom. 8:25) It is, therefore, said to save the soul—"we are saved by hope"—which it does by saving it on the one hand from the rocks of presumption, and on the other from the shoals of despair. But here it may be said to spring up as among the grass with the other graces of the Spirit, for as the promises are applied with a divine power, and the truth of God is opened with more and more sweetness and preciousness, and the soul is enabled to realize more fully and clearly its interest in the precious blood of Christ, hope rises higher and higher, and spreads itself into a more vigorous and active growth.

4. Nor must we forget that with faith and hope there springs up also love. As the Lord is pleased to draw near and manifest his beauty and blessedness; as faith gets fuller and clearer glimpses and gleams of the lovely face of Jesus, of his Person, love, blood, and obedience; and as the word of promise drops into the heart

with greater power and blessedness, love springs up toward him as so deserving of, and so drawing up to himself every secret and sacred affection of the heart. Whatever knowledge of the truth a man may profess, however clear his views, circumspect his walk, or consistent his life, if he has no love to Christ, he is in a perilous spot. That is a terrible word from the mouth of the Apostle, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema"—that is, accursed. (1 Cor. 16:22) Love also to the saints of God springs up side by side with love to the Lord, for "every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John 5:1) This is the first mark that the Scripture gives of a spiritual birth, for it declares that "we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14)

5. By the side of filial fear, faith, hope, and love, there springs up also the graces of humility, brokenness of spirit, tenderness of conscience, godly sorrow for sin, self-loathing and selfabhorrence, and a putting of our mouth into the dust. Sin is never seen in so hideous a shape as when viewed in the light of Jesus' sufferings and sorrows in the garden and upon the cross; and thus, as faith believes in a sorrowing, crucified Saviour, as hope anchors in his bleeding side, and as love flows out toward his suffering Majesty, repentance and godly sorrow melt the sinner's heart into true penitence, and if he could weep himself away in tears of contrition, he would willingly and gladly do so, and never, never sin again against such bleeding, dying love.

6. Patience also springs up to bear the weighty cross and carry it with submission and resignation to the divine will, knowing that his wisdom appoints it, his love accompanies it, and his grace supports under it.

7. There springs up, too, side by side with these more distinct fruits of the Spirit, many gracious desires, heavenly longings, and earnest aspirations toward God of all our mercies. Smitten with a sight and sense of his glory and blessedness the soul ardently desires to know him more and serve him better. What it has in hand is so little compared with what it has in hope; and its enjoyment falls so far short of what it sees in the Lord to be experienced and enjoyed.

8. Many sweet thoughts, heavenly meditations, pleasing prospects, enlarged views of truth, and lifting up the heart in praise for mercies received, spring up also as a part of the crop of righteousness which pushes its way through the thick grass. The truth and power of the Scriptures are peculiarly seen and felt, and the word of God is opened up and made very precious. At this season it is with the soul as in nature. How beautifully in spring, under the influence of the early rains, do the flowers spring up among the grass—the little violet shrouding itself modestly under the leaves, yet giving forth a sweet fragrance; the lily of the valley, in all its virgin purity, drooping its head—emblem of the soul bending in lowly humility under a sense of God's mercy and love; the pale primrose, looking up, with its eye ever fixed upon the sun; and many other a woodland gem, all in

their meek and quiet beauty singing their silent hymns to their great Creator's praise. So do the various graces of the Spirit under the showers dropped from heaven spring up as "among the grass."

But what may we understand by the expression "grass?" May we not interpret it as emblematic of the flesh, according to the words of the prophet, "All flesh is grass!" (Isa. 40:6) All the pride, pomp, and beauty of the flesh are but as grass, for "all the glory of man is as the flower of grass," (1 Pet. 1:24) which, when cut down by the scythe, soon withers, is gathered into heaps, and swept away out of the field. In this point of view we may consider the children of God to spring up amongst the sons of men as flowers among the grass, bedecking it with beauty—the only beautiful objects among the green blades. O, how blessed it is to see the children of God springing up here and there amongst the grass which everywhere so thickly covers the mead! Have we no such flowers here? Time may have been when you were hidden beneath the grass—when, though a flower in God's sight, your root was in the dust, and you lay undistinguished amidst the thick herbage. But being a flower, one of the Redeemer's own lilies, among whom he feeds (Songs 6:3) when the rain of heaven dropped upon you, you sprang up amid the crowded blades which before hid you from view.

We may view this congregation as a mead of grass; for are there not many here who are yet in the flesh, uncalled, unregenerate? But here and there is there not a flower springing up out of it? Would that I could see the mead well sprinkled with them; and some the Lord may see at present hidden beneath the grass, who will one day raise up their heads more distinctly and visibly out of it.

ii. Though I have hitherto spoken chiefly of the graces of the Spirit, as intended by the expression, "They shall spring up as among the grass," yet I am not insensible that it is susceptible of another interpretation, and that it may mean not so much the graces of the Spirit in the individual believer, as the children of God who spring up, as I have just shown, out of and amidst the surrounding world. But we now come to an expression which seems to point more distinctly to the family of God, for the promise goes on to say, "as willows by the water courses." The willow, we know, cannot exist without water: it must be near the brook or river, or it withers and dies. Take a young willow and plant it upon a mountain top or in the sandy desert, and it soon droops and perishes. But take the barest twig off the willow, and plant it near a stream, so that the water may reach it, and it will soon shoot downwards and push a vigorous stem upwards. So it is with the child of grace: he must live by the river side; he must dip his roots into that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and by it he must be continually bathed or he droops and dies. He cannot live in the world, away from Jesus, his word, ordinances, house, people, presence, Spirit, and grace, any more than a willow can live upon the mountain top; he cannot live

among carnal men, cut off from union and communion with his great and glorious Head, any more than the willow can thrive and grow in the wilderness. How beautifully is this set forth by the prophet Jeremiah, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jer. 17:7,8) The saints of God, then, grow like "willows by the water courses." The willow is not a tree beautiful to the sight; it does not grow with all the noble grandeur of the oak or tower aloft in stately dignity like the poplar, but is usually low of growth, and is ever bending and weeping over the river, as if to inhale the refreshing moisture which rises in invisible vapor from its bosom. Neither its leaf nor flower possesses striking beauty; and yet the tender branches swaying in the wind have a grace of their own as they bend and droop over the stream. And is it not so with the saints of God? How enduring, too, is the willow. What life in every branch! and even when pollard led or cut down low, still reviving "through the scent of water," (Job 14:9) and shooting out its branches afresh. May we not see in this a fitting emblem of the child of God, and admire how, like the willow, he preserves life and vigor when the nobler trees of the forest are blown down by the storm or are cut down for fuel?

III. But we may now proceed to examine, with God's blessing, the permanent results of the Lord's pouring out water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, the abiding effects of his pouring his Spirit upon Zion's seed, and his blessing upon her offspring: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Here are four permanent effects, which are spoken of as resulting from the Lord's pouring water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.

1. The first is the fruit of the lip, as manifested in power given to believe and speak with stronger confidence than before enjoyed. "One shall say, I am the Lord's:" that is, through the blessing of God resting upon the soul, the favored object shall be able, in the language of faith, without presumption and without hypocrisy, to say that he is the Lord's own peculiar property and possession; that he belongs to him by inseparable ties of union and fellowship. But can he speak thus unless the Lord has first assured him by his own lips that he is his? Surely nothing short of the Lord's own testimony in the heart can raise up a faith and a confidence so strong as this. Guilty doubts and fears must be all removed before such believing language can issue from the lips. It is the favored bride's own declaration: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." (Songs 2:16) Nor can any one, without presumption, say, "I am the Lord's" unless the Lord himself has previously spoken to him inwardly with his own blessed voice and

whispered "Thou art mine." Yes; it is only then that the soul can echo back his words in the sweet response of faith, and say, "I too am thine." What man can honestly or virtuously say to a woman, "Thou art mine," or what woman can chastely or meekly reply, "I too am thine," unless marriage or betrothal warrant such language? If there be neither of these, the one cannot say to the other without a blush, "Thou art mine:" nor can there come back the responsive echo, "Thou too art mine." So, similarly, there must be a marriage union with, or a betrothal unto Christ before any one can say, in the fear and love of God, "I am the Lord's" And how can this union take place except the Lord betroth us to himself in "lovingkindness and in mercies," according to his own promise? (Hosea 2:19) Except the Lord be pleased to give this faith, it is but presumption to use the words; but if he bestow that assurance and give that persuasion, it is no longer presumption, but a blessed confidence which he himself sanctions. O, how rich, how great the blessing, when, by the work and witness of the Holy Ghost, the soul can say, in all the meek confidence of living faith and godly fear, "I am the Lord's—his by electing grace—his by sovereign gift—his by redeeming blood—his by dying love—his by regeneration—and his by indwelling possession." For if the Lord's at all, we are his wholly. Just as when a man has a house of his own by purchase or heirship: it is wholly his, from cellar to roof; every stone and every timber; every part of the house, from the foundation to the topmost tile, are all his. So it is with the soul, if it be the Lord's. All that the Lord is, he is to it. When then the soul can say, "I am the Lord's;" it may add, "I have now everything which the Lord can give, for he has given me himself; and in bestowing himself he has bestowed everything belonging to himself. He has given his blood to redeem my soul from the lowest hell; his obedience to justify me from all things from which I could not be justified by the law of Moses; his love to seal my heart for ever to himself; his Spirit to teach, lead, and sanctify me to his own glory, and make me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He has thus given me everything to lead me safely through life: a promise that he will be with me in death; and a pledge that he will land me happily in eternity." Are not all these rich blessings comprehended in the simple expression, "I am the Lord's?" There may be but few here who can speak thus confidently. The Lord may have begun a good work in their heart; but may not yet have sealed a clear testimony in their breast, enabling them to appropriate these words as their own heartfelt language. And yet you may be the Lord's, though not able to call him yours by that endearing title; you may be the Lord's by quickening grace, without having attained to that degree of faith and grace which may one day be your happy portion. There is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; there is a going on from step to step in the divine life; and you may possess faith without possessing the full assurance of faith. Many a poor doubting soul has thought it never would be able to say, "I am

the Lord's," without one wavering doubt. But the time did come when he could say it; and you will have it before you die; nor will you be able to lay your head on a dying pillow in a sweet peace, until you can use the words, "I am the Lord's," so as to be able to close your eyes upon earth, with the sweet confidence of opening them again in heaven, to see the Bridegroom of your soul without a veil between.

2. But the text also adds, "Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." Jacob was a wrestler, for he wrestled all night with the angel; and by wrestling he obtained the blessing. There seems to be some allusion to this circumstance, for lower down we find the word "Israel" made use of—the name which God himself gave to Jacob when by wrestling he prevailed with Him. So at present you may be a wrestling Jacob, but have not yet come off a prevailing Israel. You may not be without a sense of guilt and bondage at times in your conscience, and may often doubt and fear whether the root of the matter be in you, because you cannot use the language of assurance which we have just been considering. Still you may be a wrestling Jacob. The Lord may have put his Spirit in you to enable you to wrestle with him for the blessing, and yet he may not have given you that appropriating faith whereby you can believe that he is yours, and can call him such. How full was the patriarch Jacob of doubt and fear when his own life, and that of his wife and children, lay in the very hands of the injured Esau! But it was this very fear which made him wrestle all the harder, and more fervently cry out, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Can you not say, "I am seeking for a blessing of this kind with all my heart; I am wrestling with God for it by prayer and supplication, and nothing less can satisfy me?" If this be your experience, you certainly may "call yourself by the name of Jacob."

3. The next effect spoken of is "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord:" that is, shall set to his seal that God is true. In earthly covenants and leases, and legal deeds of a similar nature, when a man signs his name and subscribes the document, it is a proof that he has a personal interest in the transaction of which it is a record. There is a similar subscription not with pen and ink, but by a spiritual hand signing and sealing the truth of the Gospel. So when you see and feel what the Gospel is; its suitability, truth, and blessedness, can you not, as it were, subscribe it with hand and heart, and say, "I love this Gospel; I can set to my seal that this is the truth which suits my soul; I want no other Gospel but this by which to live and die? I believe it is of God, for he has made it his own power unto my salvation; and whatever may be said against it, I bind it to my heart as the truth of God, the sweetness and blessedness of which I have felt in my own soul?" This is receiving the love of the truth so as to be saved thereby.

But we may attach another meaning to the words. The Lord has given you, it may be, in some time of trial and affliction, a promise, and that promise you see that he is still fulfilling. Now,

as the Lord keeps fulfilling this promise, whether it be in Providence or grace, you subscribe with your hand to him, as if you said "I can deliberately write 'Amen' to this promise: I can say the Lord has fulfilled, yes, he is even now fulfilling it." Or take another meaning of the words. You subscribe with your hand to the Lord when your soul feels heartily willing to be his for evermore. As in signing a contract, a man by attaching his signature virtually says thereby, "I agree to the bargain, and I mean as well as I can to carry out its intentions and contents;" so when you spiritually subscribe with your hand to the Lord, it is as though you said thereby "I give myself wholly up to the Lord, for I want none but him. I want the Lord to be my God; for him to be my all in all. I willingly and deliberately subscribe my desire to be wholly and solely his; and O may he ratify my handwriting by putting his own beneath it and attaching to it his own seal, that the deed may stand ratified for ever and ever in the court of heaven."

4. The last effect is—"And shall surname himself by the name of Israel." As Jacob represents a wrestler in the court of grace, so Israel is the emblem of one who has obtained the blessing. When, therefore, any wrestling Jacob has prevailed with God by strength of arm, he may surname himself by the name of Israel. He can then say—"I have wrestled with God for the promised blessing, and have obtained it. I have cried unto the Lord, and he has heard by cry. I have spread my petition before him, and he has at last granted it." So wrestled and so prevailed Hannah, David, Hezekiah, and many a saint both dead and living.

Now, can you find in your soul any of the experience described this morning? Begin from the beginning; and go thorough the whole, and see whether you can lay your finger upon any one portion as descriptive of anything that you have ever felt or known. Begin with the "dry ground," as descriptive of spiritual thirst; go on to the "water" poured, and the "floods" given; to the springing up "as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." Can you thus go on step by step so as to find some of these effects to have been produced in your soul, until you can ultimately reach the grand point of all, so as to be able to say—"I am the Lord's," and surname yourself by the name of Israel?

Thus we have seen, I trust, in our text, the work of grace traced out from beginning to end, and if you can realize some portion of your experience in it, or if you can find anything descriptive of your state and case in what I have laid before you from it, the Lord be praised. He will surely carry on the work thus happily begun; he will not leave it incomplete or unaccomplished, and when you are fully able to say, in the language of sweet assurance, "I am the Lord's" he will ratify it with his own voice from heaven, and say—"Thou art mine, and shalt be mine for ever."